

GRAHAM GREENE



THE NAME OF ACTION



Paul Atterbury

THE NAME OF ACTION

BY GRAHAM GREENE

A brilliant psychological melodrama of the
senses by the young cousin of Robert Louis
Stevenson who fulfills in this book the promise
of that remarkable first novel, THE MAN WITHIN

To Graham Greene completists,

This is a PDF version of Graham Greene's second novel, *The Name of Action*. Presented here in the form of scanned images of the original book pages. I apologize for the quality of the reproduction, but you should find it adequate to read.

I am a fan of the Paul Hogarth illustrated covers for the Penguin Editions of Greene's work, so you'll have to excuse the cover I mocked up for this one. I have also included an image of the original book cover.

Published in 1930, *The Name of Action* suffered a poor critical response and poor sales. Along with his third book, *'Rumour at Nightfall'* (published 1931) Greene had the novel repudiated. Having only around 1,000 copies sold in each the UK and USA, both books have been out of print ever since and have become somewhat of a collector's item. To offer the book in it's full context I have included a passage from Greene's book, *'Ways of Escape'*, in which he discusses his own thoughts on the book and it's repudiation.

So for better or worse, I'm pleased to offer this reproduction of *The Name of Action* by Graham Greene. Even if you agree with the original reviews, the fellow Greene completists will at least be able to tick off one of those elusive works from their reading list.

July 2012

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My second and third novels, *The Name of Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall*, published in 1930 and 1931, can now be found, I am glad to think, only in secondhand bookshops at an exaggerated price, since some years after their publication I suppressed them. Both books are of a badness beyond the power of criticism properly to evoke — the prose flat and stilted and in the case of *Rumour at Nightfall* pretentious (the young writer had obviously been reading again and alas! admiring Conrad's worst novel, *The Arrow of Gold*), the characterisation non-existent.

The main characters in a novel must necessarily have some kinship to the author, they come out of his body as a child comes from the womb, then the umbilical cord is cut, and they grow into independence. The more the author knows of his own character the more he can distance himself from his invented characters and the more room they have to grow in. With these early novels the cord has not been cut, and the author at twenty-six was as unreal to himself, in spite of psychoanalysis at sixteen, as Oliver Chant, the hero of *The Name of Action*, is to the reader. Chant is only a daydream in the mind of a young romantic author, for it takes years of brooding and of guilt, of self-criticism and of self-justification, to clear from the eyes the haze of hopes and dreams and false ambitions. I was trying to write my first political novel, knowing nothing of politics. I hope I did better many years later with *The Quiet American*, but how little I had learned of life and politics during three years in the sub-editors' room of *The Times*.

- Excerpt from "Ways of Escape" (1980)
Graham Greene (1904 - 1991)

THE NAME OF ACTION

by

Graham Greene

" . . . and lose the name of action."
Hamlet



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“ Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow
For Thine is the Kingdom.

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow.”

T. S. ELIOT

All the characters and events in
this novel are entirely imaginary

PART 1

The Name of Action

CHAPTER I

OLIVER CHANT stared through a window of his carriage over the great field of iron acres that lay between him and Trier. Red and green signal lamps flickered through a dusk which took its tone from the steel furrows. Hunched shapes rose dimly on either side and fell behind in a spray of fire. Occasionally the small figure of a man, pickaxe at ease, was seen to raise its face to the roaring passage of the express. To Chant, who could not see them fall again, the faces remained as an avenue of raised eyes watching him borne with a kind of purposeful speed to the capital.

"Trier the next stop." The voice echoed down the corridor and broke the thread of his thought. He looked up and said to the ticket-collector in the doorway, "How far—to Trier?" He had asked the question before, a

week ago, and the answer had been, "Four hundred miles." The answer now was, "Half an hour," and the slamming of a door.

The creak of a turning handle and the crash of wood against wood. Time drew together with the sound, and Chant was back in London seven days ago. A door had closed, but he was left outside, outside the scarlet door of Mrs. Meadmore's house in Mayfair. From the foot of steps which fell steeply from light to dark a voice had spoken. "You have been avoiding me all the evening," it said.

Chant, leaning forward from the light, had tried to distinguish the speaker, who presently became, from the glimmer of an up-turned face, first a small, ill-formed body and then an expression of cunning and triumph.

"I think I know you," Chant had said. "Mrs. Meadmore called you her Mazzini." Angered by the other's air of triumph he had added with deliberate rudeness, "The name was enough for me. I'm not interested in politics and I ran."

The voice said, "I've been waiting here for nearly half an hour."

"But why?"

"Because you are Mrs. Meadmore's young

Crœsus," and in answer to Chant's amused and contemptuous grimace, it added, "Crœsus was an idealist." The clumsy body raised itself with an effort from the level of the street.

Chant, displeased by the encroachment of a stronger will, had said with a certain aggression, "I don't even yet know your name," and the answer, seven days ago, had been supplied him in the same foreign tone in which a moment before his ticket had been demanded. Switched forward into the present by the connecting thought he became aware how each moment found its echo, time touched time, and the railwayman was the stranger answering his question outside Mrs. Meadmore's door: "Kurtz. From Trier, an exile." The statement had been like an offered temptation—"Do you not want to know more?"

And he had, he was most certain, wanted to know more. But he had been unwilling to fall into so obvious a trap. He had heard once of a Society for the Relief of Exiles from the Palatinate, and he saw in the stranger who barred his way, no more than an unconventional collector for charity. It had been difficult at first to remember in whose cause a cheque would

eventually have to be written. There seemed always to have been exiles from the Palatinate: nationalists in the days of the French; nationalists again when the republicans seized power after the evacuation, and now republicans themselves in exile and a dictator ruling in Trier.

"You are a Separatist?" Chant had asked. Only half aware of his own movement, he came down into the street and fell into step at the other's side. Curiosity had conquered. He was even unconscious of the streets down which they turned; and a taxi, hugging the pavement edge like a blind man, passed slowly and unsignalled. Talking rapidly with small gesticulations of the hand and with a heated face, Kurtz seemed triumphant at the mere possession of an audience. For days he must have hungered for a chance to speak. "I know what you are thinking." Shapeless awkward words tumbled from his mouth. "The papers tell you that we were bought by France. At least we gave the Palatinate liberty. That was something, you know, after twelve years of the French." A hand was projected into the light of a lamp and made a vehement and surprising gesture. "I tell you I'd rather have a French general back

than this man at Trier."

Watching from the window of his carriage the lights of the city crystallize on the horizon, Chant wondered to think how nearly at those stale phrases he had broken away and lost the chance of release from the round he knew and hated—lunch with Peter Remnant, dinner at Mrs. Meadmore's, breakfast with himself; the cold self-conscious stare from the image in the mirror at the long table's end melted into and became the reflection of an excited face laid across the lights and dim scenery through the carriage window. With his lips already prepared to frame the "Good night" which would, he thought, dismiss a potential beggar into the dark, he had said with contempt, "Why didn't you fight then?"

The verb possessed a personal meaning, gathered from books and brooding and in some degree from hopes. It meant death, the kind of death which dignifies the most unworthy object with the immortality of no further change. His words had brought before his eyes a familiar vision of barricades built of the pathetic accumulated furniture of the poor, the kitchen tables, broken-backed chairs, moth-

riddled red satin couches, pictures of dogs—"The Friend of Man"—even an alarm clock was ticking with an elderly passivity on the top of this barricade of his dream.

It had been most effectively dispelled by Kurtz's answer: "We couldn't fight. We had no money."

"Then how could Demassener. . . .?"

"He got money somehow. They say, perhaps, France. . . ."

"How difficult it is to get the truth," Chant cried with a wave of resentment against a world of shadowy motives.

"Should I be in exile now?" Kurtz asked, "and as for the other man he has a French wife." French wife. French wife. Of course he remembered then; even the name Anne-Marie had pleased him. He had read it aloud to himself from beneath a picture in *The Tatler*. She was only one of a group photographed at Longchamps, but the face was more memorable than was often to be found in those surroundings, dark and attentive, perhaps in the original beautiful, but Chant could not tell.

"That's no proof," he had said, for it seemed

to him, remembering the photograph and the instant impression which it had made upon him, that there were a thousand reasons why a man might wish to marry her and not one of them political. "One can believe nothing," he had added. "They say the place is well-managed."

"Everyone is well-managed," Kurtz said. "You do not know what it means to have to report every day at the police station. You can trust no one, not even the waiters. I criticised the Press censorship one day over a glass of wine. That is why I am here," and Kurtz looked with such frank distaste at his surroundings that Chant's heart went out to him.

"So there's a Press censorship," he said. "That explains a lot."

"Not only the Press," Kurtz had continued, "literature too."

The train clattered, lurched sideways across a point, and strode on over a hollow, throbbing metal. Chant looked out and down at a river that became evident only when it reflected a rush of sparks in its surface, a long metallic road a little darker than the fields on either side, sprinkled here and there with golden pieces.

A sudden spurt of flame far below showed him a man with upturned face lighting a pipe, and a brief triangle of bow of the barge on which he sat. Then the bridge became only a sound receding in the night, and the train resumed its swift and level stride.

Kurtz's remark had closed all comment, for Chant had been unaware of any literature in the Palatinate, and he remained silent and questioning. Kurtz said, "You know a country can be made by its literature, made I mean with a separate individuality. We had a beginning and what will happen now that's suppressed?" He had not waited for Chant to answer. "The man at Trier," he said, "will either hand us over to France or to Bavaria. It's his only choice since Berlin went Socialist."

"But why should you not remain as you are—the Palatinate?"

"He's strangled that," Kurtz answered, and for a moment this interchange of political theory became startlingly real, for it had seemed to Chant that he walked beside a man who really loved and hated,—loved the Palatinate as a man might love a dead woman,

not fiercely but elegiacally,—and hated, as he would hate, not this time as a memory only, the man that had killed her.

It was then that Kurtz halted abruptly before a doorway and Chant became aware of a smell of stale greens and cheap cigars, the native fragrance of Soho. A spatter of warm rain blew along the pavement, which lay in a red glow of light flung from a gigantic wineglass raised above the houses at regular intervals by a Gargantuan hand. At the end of the narrow street he could see a thoroughfare one degree less dimly lit and a last omnibus halting for a pair of old untidy prostitutes.

Kurtz, opening the door on to a passage lit by a single electric globe and furnished with a strip of oilcloth, said to him with the effect of an ultimatum, "You know why Mrs. Meadmore wished to introduce us?"

"I know Mrs. Meadmore and I can guess."

"And yet," Kurtz said, "I am not going to beg from you. I can offer you as much as you can offer me. Will you come in?"

Chant had stepped inside and Kurtz led the way up a steep and narrow stair, past small

landings faced by unpainted doors. "A *maison de convenance*," Kurtz said. "They do these things better in Paris."

When they came to the top of the building and to the single room in which Kurtz lived, Chant questioned him. "What do you mean? What is it you can offer me?"

"Only if you are really Cræsus," Kurtz said, "Cræsus the idealist. You left Mrs. Meadmore's early, didn't you? I did too. How tired I was of all those people." Chant had watched him, taken in the face still heated by the release of speech, the easily flinching, rather pathetic eyes. Sincerity, he thought, like oil will never mix with water, for water his fellows essentially were. "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel"—they were a living refutation of the proverb. They had taste, they had wit, and to Chant the ever-present anxiety was the question: Is their excellence to which you cannot attain, at which you secretly sneer, not the gesture, the *panache* you seek? But it had been easier for him on that evening, glancing at Kurtz's face, to protest that there existed a deeper gesture, a more profound excellence.

Not that he had followed all the words, the trite, sincere phrases which whirled from the little creature, while body and gestures were caricatured by the immense, unstable shadow on wall and ceiling. The long oration had faded into a back part of his brain, whence he could capture only random glints of it separated by oblivion. The night, he could realise now, had mounted in its significance to a peak of excitement, and it was only the peak that he could clearly remember, like the lover who forgets the stages of his passion in its fulfilment. As though the spirit had slipped from the body to watch its posturing, while sharing in its transports, he could see himself where he had stood, half-way between a washhand-stand and a cupboard of polished deal, trembling a little with excitement and saying in a voice which amazed himself, "I'll go to Trier."

Kurtz had talked and talked, painting on the cheap wall-paper of the room (roses that bloomed as floridly as cabbages), a picture of oppression; of a town in which short and secret trials were a prelude to exile; and where a man could not speak or write without the approval of the Dictator. "The city is as clean now as

a white-washed room," Kurtz said. "Before there was, perhaps, immorality. You can't avoid it where there is freedom and we were free." That was the word on which he had harped to Chant, to whom the suppression of a book or a poem was more to be condemned than the licentiousness of a world. He had two friends, Kurtz said, a poet and an artist. Because they were republicans their works were banned and they found it hard to live. But they waited at Trier, believing in the future of their movement. "All that is required is money, money for arms, money—it is regrettable perhaps—for bribery." But it was to the word "arms" and not to the word "bribery" that Chant had responded, his heart beating with a desire that his brain resisted—a desire which conquered at last when, his fingers on the door, his brain capitulated and he said, "I'll go to Trier."

Kurtz at once admitted that he had gained his object. He had lived a year in England seeking money before Mrs. Meadmore came to his help. "There is no need," he explained, "for you to go to Trier yourself. I can give you security for a loan." Seeing the disappointment in Chant's eyes he

added quickly, "I would rather that you went. Many of our friends at Trier are apathetic. It is so much easier, you understand, to do nothing. There is one man, however, you can trust, my friend, Joseph Kapper. The poet," he remarked with pride. "I do not read poetry, myself, but I respect it. I am told that he is a great poet. You should take with you, or better still transfer to a bank in Coblenz, at least three thousand pounds." He had made no apology for the size of the sum required and Chant was grateful. He had pledged his assistance and he was proud that it should not be questioned.

"I cannot let my friends know you are coming," Kurtz said. "My letter would not reach them. A code is useless. My letters are destroyed whatever they contain. I will give you a note to take, but you must hide it carefully. Your bags at the hotel will probably be searched."

He had made the last statement simply, as though it contained no unusual significance. Nor had his voice contained any hint of amazement that the world should still contain danger and mystery when he spoke of how his friend

—"the great poet"—might be found. Turning to the left at the bottom of the marketplace—but he would not trouble Chant now with the minute directions. They should be written out for him. Only when he entered the shoemaker's kept by Sebastian Lintz opposite the Jesuit Seminary, he must be very careful to say that the heels of his shoes needed repairing with some of Herr Lintz's old leather.

Oliver Chant could not remember how he had walked home that night. He had reached Kurtz's lodging through narrow ordured streets, but the way by which he returned had been spacious and extravagantly lit with stars. It had been an incongruous song to which his feet beat time and lingered unwilling to leave the promise of the night and be shut within their small familiar room. For the two words that were the key to Sebastian Lintz's trust had sung themselves within his brain until "old leather" seemed a subject more full of poetry than the first Eden. Indeed the whole adventure promised to be the first Eden, an Eden perhaps for once without the snake.

He did not wish it to be without the woman. After reaching home he had searched an

accumulation of papers till he found the remembered photograph. The distinction, which he had noted in the wife of Paul Demassener, seemed to have increased since his meeting with Kurtz. That this woman was opposed to his friends, and that unknown to her he was her enemy, had given him a peculiar feeling of intimacy with the slanted eyes and the dark hair. He had sat a long time examining the photograph, trying to learn her features by heart. It had seemed strange that she would soon be so accessible to his gaze that he might meet her at any moment in the streets of Trier. Dawn had nearly come before he laid down the picture. From the Dictator Demassener's wife the mind had wandered by an easy and obvious road to poetry and art. Strange that the woman who might so easily have been the subject of either should be their enemy, had been his last thought before sleep took him.

And now in the carriage three figures danced in the mirror to the motion of the train and seemed to speed it on the last stretch to Trier—Demassener's wife, as she appeared in the photograph, but a little idealised, a certain rectitude in the slanting eyes to make her a

more worthy enemy, and his two allies, the poet Joseph Kapper and the artist, Peter Torner. To these two he attached his own conceptions of a poet and artist—a young man like Marlowe, impetuous, with flushed face and ready weapon, and an older man like Rubens, the splendid courtier. What man, he triumphed to himself, had ever before possessed such a trinity for friends and enemy. He had become during the last week so well acquainted with all three that it never occurred to him that he was a stranger to them all.

While preparing for his journey he had given little consideration to Demassener. When he had pictured him at all, it was as a strong and stupid man. Only once, during his last night in England, did the Dictator touch his imagination. On the way home across Trafalgar Square with Kurtz's letter to Kapper in his pocket, Chant had stopped to watch the news spelt out in golden letters through the blue dusk above Whitehall. Slowly with a beautiful and incongruous mystery, the dark was fractured to reveal that an English cricket team had been defeated in the West Indies. Bright, interchanging numerals sparkled like fireworks and

confused the eyes. Then again with a deliberate magic, luminous words were dropped into the night, words which Chant felt were intended for him alone, for to him only in London did they bear a special significance. *Court martial in Trier. Two Republican agitators were to-day condemned to death by court martial for carrying arms. The sentence has been confirmed by Demassener.*

For the first time Chant faced his enemy. The words were a challenge, showing him in one lit moment reality. If he left London the next day, that was what he would face, a short trial and a surreptitious shuffling off of life, the news to be spilt as casually into as unconcerned a night. He was glad that for once life was to be uncertain and in place of the regular succession of meals, theatres, parties at Mrs. Meadmore's, a dark gap faced him and he could not tell whether he would be alive or dead when May succeeded April.

"Trier, Trier, Trier"—voices calling through the flashing lamps, a few stumbling words, and he was on the threshold of the night which burned so steadily in the long avenue before him, was so peaceful in its unflickering

lights, that it seemed to belie danger and ally itself with peace. A hand touched his elbow. Two men with fair moustaches touched two soft hats, and then, with no preliminary explanation, ran their hands over his coat and down his trousers. Two deprecating smiles, two hats again touched, and they were gone. With an excited pleasure Chant realised that he had been searched for arms. The lights might burn steadily and the people in the street move slowly, peacefully, with apparent content: he had, he thought, seen through their pretence to the dangerous trinity behind.

CHAPTER II

THROUGH the black Roman gate, which stood away from the street lights like an old elephant fascinated but afraid of the camp fires lit in its familiar jungle, Chant passed into an Easter peace. The shop windows were full of hares dragging little carts laden with confectionery, with toys and unpretentious gifts. A man in a green suit with a feather in his hat bent absorbed and spectacled eyes upon a tray of marzipan. A whiff of cigar smoke blew from a beerhouse door, and at a corner two old women stood reluctant to part; their faces knotted like the roots of oak trees seemed to brood on innumerable Easters, their memories a playground of hares and carts and blonde children waking early and reaching through the sunlight to the bottom of their beds.

Walking so slowly down the Simeon-strasse that he became unconscious of his own exertion and it seemed the shops that moved, Chant felt a kind of paternal benevolence towards all these

people. He had come to Trier to help them, although for a moment a doubting inner voice asked whether indeed they needed help. Everything in the lamplight, under the shower of pale gold dust which lay across the roofs and on the clothes and faces of the last shoppers, spoke of peace. In the windows that jogged gaily past him the small hares strode with their burdens, or else crudely painted images of the Liebe Frau returned his gaze with a vacuity which failed to express the idea of an agonizing love. Somewhere from an invisible tower a clock relinquished its load of hours.

A small blonde girl flattened her nose against the window of a *bäkerie*, her large blue eyes staring intently past rich and recondite cakes, past pink and white wooden angels playing on harps, even past the ubiquitous hare, to a house made of marzipan with a sugar plum for the door. The sense of benevolence, of dangerous walking in a hazardous peace, conquered Chant's shyness and he expressed in halting German his intention of buying her the house. The child removed her gaze from the window and fixed him with the same silent fascination. Another blonde child approached along the pavement.

In a moment, Chant thought, the pavement would be crowded with blonde girls in long plaits astare at him as the living embodiment of the Easter hare. To escape from embarrassment he entered the shop. The shopkeeper was putting up the shutters.

Using gestures when words failed him Chant explained what he wished to buy. He was met by upraised hands and a rapid flow of German, from which he could only pick out the numeral "Sieben"—twice repeated.

"Seven marks," he hazarded and took a handful of change from his pocket.

The shopkeeper laughed with a rich enjoyment. Humour broke the rapidity of his speech, and Chant was able to gather that the Englishman was very innocent if he was willing to pay seven marks for a little house made of marzipan.

Uncomfortably conscious of three blonde heads peering at him round the door of the shop, Chant protested, "You said seven." No, no, no, again the laughter welling from a deep source out from the lit room into the darker street, a flame of delight surely, Chant thought, to all blonde moths with blue protuberant eyes.

"Seven what then?" he implored. Seven hours. It was too late to buy. All shops had to be closed at seven. He could delay no longer, the shopkeeper explained. A policeman might come down the street at any moment. He flapped his hands and drove Chant and the children into the street, leaving Chant to face alone the incomprehension of eyes as vacant as those of the Liebe Frau in the shops.

Chant looked back from the market place and saw that the lights in Simeon-strasse were already dimmed. The shutters had gone up, and night advanced one pace in a long line on either side. Only the lamps in the centre of the street made a bright chain to the Porta Nigra. Down a side street, dwarfing its screen of trees, rose the triple bastion of the cathedral, a fortress rather than a church, a mediæval prelate helmed and spurred for war. Across the cobbles of the square the wheels of the last barrows trundled home. In a corner of the market place, under an old red leaning house, a beggar was playing on a violin. The music was like a faded but respectful imitation of something great. The notes tumbled after each other in a parody of

strength—the charge of maimed, hungry horses—then rose in a pastiche of ecstasy on heavy wings like overburdened kites towards the spire of St. Gangolf's church. Except for Oliver Chant and a few women going home the square was empty, but the man played on without hope of profit, as though he found some pleasure in his own ravaged music. The peace of the night was broken for Chant by this hint of an unexpressed pain. But he was glad, for he had not come to Trier to find peace.

Opposite the ancient cross he found a small gasthaus more suited to his mood than the larger hotels that clustered round the Porta Nigra. These were for the rich, the supporters of Demassener, who had nothing to do with any hungry aspirations, ravaged ecstasies, raised faces lit by sparks.

Chant's room was small, with a slanting attic roof and a window hard to open, that faced a little yard, where a hen was inscribing a series of Arabian footmarks in the dust. For a few moments Chant lay relaxed upon the feather bed. He had travelled for nearly twenty-four hours and he would have found it easy to sleep, his senses drugged by weariness.

ness, by the faint smell of cigars, and the tinkle of a distant musical box. The sound of far voices was sprinkled over him like the seeds of a poppy bringing rest. A lamp was extinguished in the yard, darkening the window pane, and he rose quickly from the bed, afraid of this insidious peace. He must find the shoemaker's shop by the Jesuit Seminary that evening, before daylight, bath and breakfast, shopping crowds, should rob his mission of the last shreds of reality.

In the restaurant, a long, low room like a tunnel, he could at first distinguish little, through the haze of tobacco smoke, beyond the frontier of his table. The face of the old man who had shown him to his room appeared out of the haze, took his order for beer and schnitzel, and vanished again. The musical box broke into a dramatic profundity of Wagner, ending with the whirr of a revolving cylinder as the pfennig was exhausted. Then when the smoke cleared from his eyes, he could see the Germans in the restaurant, family parties to the third generation, drinking beer. They became aware of his nationality, and in his honour someone wound up a gramophone and put on a record of

"It ain't gonna rain no more."

"English music," the proprietor of the gasthaus explained, approaching and beaming at Chant through the haze, and Chant explained that he thought German music more beautiful, and each smiled at each, deprecating his own nation politely.

Once again Chant warmed to this town and to this people, for whom he would fight with a better will than he could ever fight for his own land. Englishmen as a generalisation, what were they? Stupid hunting squires in red coats and with inflamed faces; little, sniggering Cockney clerks; heavy witted and bestial farm labourers; Peter Remnant, Mrs. Meadmore. One could fight perhaps for England as a country, if one kept one's eyes on autumn beeches, a pond with cows drinking, and did not look five hundred yards to the right at the bungalows and five hundred yards to the left at the arterial road. But how one wearied at the constant, careful harbouring of small impressions.

On the wall above Chant's head hung a placard, the lettering hidden. He turned it round and saw that it announced concerts each

evening at seven and nine. "At nine to-night?" he asked the old man when he brought a fresh glass of beer, but the old man shook his head. No, there were no more concerts, he explained in a voice unnaturally devoid of intonation. The concerts were closed by order of the Dictator.

Chant left his beer and pushed back his chair. It was as though he had received a signal, heard a trumpet blown. Only when he reached the door did he remember that Trier was not his home, that he was a stranger in an unknown town. "The Jesuit Seminary?" he asked, and was told to leave the market-place by the Brode-strasse and turn to the left at the end of the street. The old man delayed him for a moment with a hand on his sleeve. The gentleman, he said, would be sure to return at midnight. No one was allowed in the streets after midnight. The gentleman would not find much to do in the evening. There was a cinema near the Porta Nigra, but it would be very crowded. There were no concerts now.

"A pity," Chant commented. "What harm is there in music?" The old man said that it was the order.

But in the small court before the Jesuit Seminary Chant felt no need for anything but silence. The white building, flanked by twin towers, fell, like a square wash of moonlight, behind a group of figures stilled in a tortuous aspiration towards the slender, ignoring Mary above them. The green stones of a church made an abrupt angle with the seminary and stood back a little way as though in reverence at man's replica of holiness. Below the level of the square and forming its fourth side a leaning row of decayed houses ran downwards into the dark, away from frozen, day-long, night-long moonlight.

Down this lane he came on the house described in Kurtz's letter. A doorway led into a small yard, where the grass thrust withered stalks between the stones. An unpainted door on the left bore Sebastian Lintz's name. It opened to a push and Chant found himself facing across a narrow counter an old man with spectacles and sparse beard, whose sudden appearance from a room behind might have been mechanically controlled by the opening of the door. Chant watched him in silence, savouring the instant, the last perhaps in my life he thought, of safety, dullness and routine.

Then because the old man also remained silent, fingering some scraps of leather on the counter, apparently quite ready to allow the moment to run into minutes, even hours, Chant spoke.

"I have some shoes," he said, "which need mending."

The old man put out his hands. "Show them to me."

"You must understand," Chant continued, speaking very slowly, partly because of the uncertainty of his German but more because this was the moment of which he had dreamed almost continuously during the last week, "that I want my heels repaired with some of your old leather." His voice broke on the last phrase and he feared that he had not been heard. The old man took off his spectacles and wiped them on his apron. "Repairs to the heels, one mark fifty pfennig," he said.

"With some of your old leather," Chant repeated.

The shoemaker shook his head. "I do not understand. Old leather? My leather is new, but it is all of good quality. I will show you," and he began to pull strips from a shelf beneath

the counter, stroking them with sensitive, tremulous fingers.

"You are Lintz, Herr Sebastian Lintz?" Chant asked helplessly in a voice dulled by disappointment. He had been deceived by moonlight and blue dusk. They had blurred his eyes, until he had imagined rainbows shot through a grey world. Smoke, little men moving to high office chairs, stunted limbs and voices shrill with age, anger and weariness, closed him in and pressed him close to the one old spectacled man.

"Yes, my name is Lintz."

"And old leather, the words 'old leather' mean nothing to you?"

The ancient head shook like a baroque pendulum. If the gentleman wanted his shoes mended he would find no better leather in Trier. He could not understand why the gentleman wanted old leather.

"Old leather for the heels?" Chant repeated in the mechanical reiteration of a tired brain. He knew that the old man thought him mad, but he put his hands on the counter, as though he would cling to it rather than turn his back and admit irrevocably knowledge of mockery

and deceit. Speaking less with hope for an answer than from the need of speech, he said, "Herr Kurtz told me that you would understand."

The old man clapped both hands to his head with a gesture of despair. "Ah, what a fool I am," he said. "You are a friend of Herr Kurtz? The password. What a memory I have. I had forgotten the password." He laughed deprecatingly. "Old leather. What a wag Herr Kurtz is. Good, good." He stretched out both hands to Chant. "My friend," he said, "you must come inside at once and tell your news. Kapper and Torner are here now." He lifted a section of the counter and pulled Chant through to the door of the room behind. Flinging it open he cried, "A friend of Herr Kurtz with news."

The change from despair had been too sudden for Chant to lose his new inclination towards a suspicious wisdom. He felt no fresh disappointment at the sight of a thin Jew, who started nervously forward, though forward was not the word to express his sidelong advance which ended at Chant's side and in its course offered to the gaze no more than a profile and a single

eye. "I am Kapper," he said, as though his name bore an international significance. A fat man with gentle eyes watched them furtively from a corner.

"My name is Oliver Chant. Herr Kurtz sent me here from London." All three men stiffened a little at the word "sent."

"We are all friends of Herr Kurtz," Kapper said slowly, spacing out his words as if to afford himself time for thought, "but you understand—perhaps," he rambled, "you have a letter?"

The letter was already in Chant's hand and he held it out. He received the impression that all three men had started forward to grasp it, but it was Kapper who succeeded. Whether by chance or choice he backed against the wall, so that neither of his friends could see over his shoulder. He read the letter very slowly, his eye every now and then travelling back to an earlier paragraph. Chant, silent and ill at ease, stared at the wall behind Kapper's head. Out of a turmoil of German and French verses, scrawled in chalk and pencil upon the walls, he picked a line of English, which disappeared behind Kapper's narrow shoulders. "Brother's

nibbled the nipple off Helen's breast, Having gnawed his fill——" He became conscious that Kapper was watching him.

"Of course," the poet said, "Herr Kurtz does not understand the situation." He fluttered the letter. "His plans are fantastic."

Disappointment, Chant thought, was his fate now.

"I do not wish to interfere," he said. "If you have no use for me——"

"I have no use for Herr Kurtz's plans," Kapper interrupted, "but you could be of great use, if you will forget all this. This business of importing arms," he added.

"How else?" Chant asked.

Joseph Kapper raised his small dark head and gestured with his arms. "The pen," he said with unction, "is mightier than the sword." Through the guttural German came faintly the nasal note that spoke of deserts and a doubting people and the flight from Egypt.

"The pen and the brush," Torner said softly and pleadingly. Kapper was magnanimous. "The pen and the brush," he corrected himself, and then with another gesture, "Take a seat,

Herr Chant. Sebastian, a glass of beer for the gentleman."

Chant sat down. Beneath his glass the picture of a fat naked woman prancing down a brightly coloured street failed to penetrate even the surface of his mind. Across the table the three men sat and faced him, like a board of examiners.

"About this money, Herr Chant?" Kapper said. He had spread Kurtz's letter before him, but again, by chance or choice, kept it shaded from his companions by one thin hand.

"The money is ready," Chant said.

"You understand that it will not go far."

"I am ready," Chant said, with a faint note of weariness, "to subscribe more within reason."

The weariness attracted the notice of all three men. They leant across the table, their hands moving rapidly, their voices explaining in contradictory terms that they were not ungrateful, that Herr Chant was already too kind, that they could not dream——, that they knew that they could rely——. Kapper clapped his hands together. "Peter," he said, "Sebastian." His voice held reproof that they should have interrupted him (Kapper, plain Kapper, no need for

a Christian name), and that they should be further wearying their guest with protestations. In the silence that followed he rose, and as though the formal examination, which Chant noticed had dealt only with his money was at an end, held out his hand. "In the name of my comrades," he said, "in the name of Trier, I, Kapper, welcome you." He sat down again and Sebastian refilled the mugs of beer. Torner lit a cigarette and Kapper offered Chant a cigar.

"And now," Chant said, "What are your plans?"

A faint indignation marred the satisfied features before him. "Of course," Kapper said with irritation, "our plans are ready. We have been waiting two years for our chance of action. Herr Kurtz may think us sluggards, but he is wrong. Are we not here while he is in London?"

"If you could give me some idea of how I could help? I had thought," Chant added slowly, "of barges from Coblenz——"

Kapper spoke with nervous anger. "I have said that Herr Kurtz's plans are fantastic." He seemed to remember that in the last resort their hopes depended on Chant's money. "We must at least," he modified his words, "go carefully.

Our plan——” he looked around with exaggerated caution as though an enemy might have found space to hide in the small crumpled room. “Sebastian, stay here and see that the door is kept shut. Peter, we will show Herr Chant that we have not been idle in Trier.” Kapper and Torner rose and pulled the table away from the centre of the room. Lifting a carpet they revealed a trap door in the floor.

Torner descended a few steps below the level of the room. He found a switch, and a light began to burn dimly and waveringly in a large cellar beneath. The steps, Chant noticed as he followed, were of stone, worn deeply in the centre. “An old wine cellar,” Kapper murmured in his ear, “now our arsenal.”

Not until he reached the floor did Chant look up, his thoughts, kindled by the word “arsenal,” expectant of arm racks. A spider’s web stretched across the stairway a little above the level of his face. The stone walls looked damp and heavy like slabs of badly made cake. In a corner a naked electric globe flickered weakly, the light gleaming more brightly where it struck runlets on the walls. Water dripped into a wooden packing case with open lid, and Chant

drew back in distaste, thinking that he had seen a rat dart from beneath it and run from wall to wall. But when the same movement was repeated, he realised that it was only the monotonous shifting of a shadow. Then, as his sight strengthened, in the darkest corner a vague and puzzling shape built itself up in blocks of shade. He wondered, a little repelled, what strange instrument of death stood there to dignify a dingy cellar with the name of arsenal.

"I, Kapper, imagined this." Chant started at the voice behind him and caught his first glimpse of what was happening behind the black, shifting curtain of the Jew's eyes, dark halls and clammy mysteries and perpetual night. Must I, too, he wondered, become a part of that dream and let myself be shifted here and there by that imagination always in darkness?

"What is it?" he whispered and stood still. Ten yards away, but still disguised in shadow, the strange object, like a cramped and stunted machine, thrust out bars and blocks at contradictory angles.

Kapper laughed mirthlessly and Torner somewhere near the staircase began to giggle. "It is not dangerous, Herr Chant," the Jew said, "I

believe you are afraid of it. Go closer and look at it. I made it myself. It is a printing machine."

"But the arsenal?" Chant asked.

"This is our arsenal," Kapper replied, sliding his body round so that he stood in front of Chant and was able to lay one hand on the machine of his making.

"You mean propaganda, leaflets——"

"Yes, and my poems." Kapper scrutinised Chant, suspicious of a smile. "They work, Herr Chant, slowly, bloodlessly they work. But for a whole month now we have been able to print nothing. We had no money. Now with your help there shall be more leaflets, more of Peter's pictures, a new edition of my poems. Herr Chant," his voice rose in nasal excitement, "we will flood Trier."

With his vision of barricades fading Chant spoke. "Yes, but how long will all this take?"

"Not so long, Herr Chant. We are making progress. Demassener is afraid of me. But he can prove nothing. He has not discovered my little machine. He knows that before long even the police will be humming my songs."

In the centre of conflicting shadows Kapper

seemed to become aware of another mind thinking in opposition to his own. He struck his hand on a lever and leant forward. "Listen, Herr Chant. You want war, but we must not risk Trier for our own glory. The people here do not like Demassener. They are not happy. They are moved hither and thither and told to do this and that. But they have peace, employment, and they know exactly what every day will bring. We of the old republic number perhaps a thousand, but we cannot trust the people. They will stand aside, perhaps even help Demassener. They do not like him, but they respect him. In a way they trust him." Kapper paused. The sound of his own voice, pleading so eloquently, excited him. "Herr Chant, we must destroy both their respect and their trust."

Of course the man was right, Chant told himself. His own was the sentimental and useless way. He had come to Trier to help and not to obstruct. Demassener was too powerful an enemy to be beaten by anything but reason. He flung himself into a blind support of Kapper's plans. "You shall have a thousand pounds to-morrow," he said and to avoid the Jew's

thanks, which he had imagined for a different end, he returned hastily across the cellar.

At the bottom step he paused. "How do you distribute your leaflets?" he asked.

Kapper smiled with pride. "Now you shall see something of our organisation," he said. "Kurtz little knows, Herr Chant, how we have been working. I tell you this. I write a poem one night, it is printed here next morning, and during the night our agents fix it on every hoarding in Trier; it is pasted on the windows of the palace itself; a copy is on every table in every restaurant. In the morning the police discover it, tear it down, take it from the tables, but how many, Herr Chant, have read it first? How many have slipped it into their pockets to show to their friends? The poem is unsigned, but they each laugh when they read it, laugh with derision at Demassener, and say, 'This is Kapper's work. What a butt the Dictator makes for Kapper.'"

He stopped in what had promised to be a long tirade. Down the stairs came the sound of a low whistle.

"But Demassener——" Chant began before he realised that Kapper was listening with an

agonised expression of indecision and surprise. The Jew paid him no attention. "Peter," he called, "shut the trap door."

"No, no," Peter said, "let us go up first. There is time. Sebastian is in no hurry."

"The police?" Chant asked with a feeling of irony that his activities should be thus still-born.

"How can I tell?" Kapper snapped at him in the tone of a harassed housewife. He had one foot on the stair and beat nervously with his hands against the walls. The whistling sifted down to them again, unhurried, but now to Chant's mind peculiarly compelling. It was Peter Torner who took the decision out of his leader's hands. Bending his large body into the smallest possible compass he threw himself up the stairs. Kapper followed and Chant felt his way in a more leisurely fashion after him. When he emerged into the room the two men were impatiently waiting to drag the carpet into place.

Chant, resenting the indignity of the scramble, stood apart and listened. Through the door Sebastian's voice explained again and again that his shop was closed. The voice that

answered him, that it was to be presumed argued with him, Chant failed to distinguish through the noise which his companions made, but one fact was evident.

"It can't be the police," he said.

"A spy," Kapper whispered, and "Yes, a spy," Peter Torner agreed. Fat beads of sweat rolled across his brow like drops of mercury. In the silence that followed their exertions Chant could distinguish the stranger's voice.

"It's a woman," he said.

His statement seemed to please Kapper. The atmosphere was relieved of fear if not of suspicion. The Jew smiled, but Chant noticed that he kept his right hand in his pocket. "Sebastian," he called, "what is it, Sebastian?" All three men stared with suspense and expectation as the door into the shop opened, and brushed aside the vision of the shoemaker to light on the figure that stood behind him.

Chant became conscious that drama had been heightened to a lyrical intensity and wondered at the good fortune which had not only brought him to Sebastian Lintz's shop in the Jesuitenstrasse but had thus composed the circumstances of his coming into the figure before him, the

slender woman with slanting eyes and short dark uncovered hair. The hair, brushed back from an unnaturally white forehead, curved in a crescent behind the ears. A black jersey with a high neck clothed her body tightly in a kind of chain mail. This and the lifted chin seemed to wait a sword thrust rather than a word. A second self, however, stood apart, watching his paralysed body, noting the stains upon his clothes from the cellar walls, the unsavoury yellow of his finger tips marred by tobacco, the anxious pallor of his face, untidy hair. "This," it seemed to say, "is what she sees," and as she appraised them with unconcerned, uninterested glance, "How well you fit with your companions, that shifty-eyed, mean-bodied Jew and his fat friend. You are not yourself, you are only one of three."

"Have any of you sufficient manners," she said slowly, "to offer me a glass of brandy?"

"I was telling her," Lintz protested, "that we are not an inn. We do not sell drink." Chant found his voice, but in the hurry of his thoughts, he spoke in English. "You've hurt yourself." He ceased to become one of a self-

conscious group and started towards her. "Let me see your wrist."

"Oh, that," she looked with slight distaste at a moving streak of scarlet that disappeared between her fingers. "That's nothing," she answered in slow precise English, rebuking him as though he had drawn attention to a blemish of the skin, something that a touch of powder would remedy. Yet he persisted. "Give me your handkerchief." She opened her other hand and showed a damp red bundle. "The glass of my windscreen," she said. "It is nothing. It has nearly stopped bleeding. If you will give me a glass of brandy . . ."

Her voice did not ask a favour but commanded with no hint that she considered the possibility of a denial. She frowned slightly because no one jumped to do her bidding. Chant turned to the other men. "Brandy," he said. Torner made an indeterminate movement towards a cupboard, but the Jew stood where he was. He smiled and shook his head. A small nerve beat like a bird's breast at a corner of his mouth. "Don't you know who she is?" he asked.

Chant nodded his head. Strange, he

thought, that the Jew for the first time should assume a kind of dignity when he was thus refusing help to a woman. He looked covertly at Anne-Marie Demassener. She seemed unaware that she was under discussion, and the carriage of her head indicated that she considered herself beyond discussion by such men. She waited coldly and patiently to be obeyed.

Chant said to Joseph Kapper with sudden anger, "Fetch some brandy." To his surprise Kapper obeyed. He took a glass and a bottle from a cupboard and placed them on the table, but it was Chant who was forced to pour out the spirit and carry it to Demassener's wife.

"Won't you sit down?" he said, and feeling like a waiter in a café, dusted a chair. She thanked him in a mechanical otherwhere manner and came to the table. After a glance at the chair she decided to remain standing. When she spoke he wanted to jump to attention. He was pleased that she spoke in English and thus far separated him from his companions.

"I suppose that I was driving too fast," she said. "The car skidded, but I do not think that it is much damaged." She sipped the brandy. "Let me bind up your hand?" he suggested.

Again she seemed to accuse him of a lack of breeding. "There is no need. The blood has dried." He did not persist, for he saw that it was true. The brandy had brought a faint colour to a skin which was usually, he was certain, of an almost startling white.

She put down her glass and stared with a faint and malicious smile at something which lay below it. Chant saw Peter Torner's face redden and Sebastian disappear into the shop. Only Kapper was unembarrassed, his own smile reflecting the woman's. For the first time she seemed to consider the Jew as an individual. They regarded each other if not with friendship at least with a kind of mutual understanding. Chant saw beneath the glass the picture of a fat naked woman in a picture hat prancing down a crudely coloured street.

"A little unfair," Anne-Marie Demassener said softly, speaking in French as though her arrogant mind refused to address the Jew in his own tongue.

"You will notice," Kapper said, with a bold smile, "that I have corrected it."

"Ah, the chalk marks. It seems a pity though that your artist cannot catch a likeness." She

raised her glass and sipped a little of the brandy. "But then, of course, he has no material for a portrait."

"Exactly what the artist said, madame." Anne-Marie Demassener allowed her gaze to leave the polished black eyes in front of her and, as though Kapper's words had given her the subject for an amusing thought, stared at the plaster of the walls with an abstracted smile. Chant watched and listened and failed to understand. He broke the silence which formed a respectful guard around the woman's thought. "Kapper . . ."

The woman twisted her gaze back to the Jew with sudden interest. Kapper swore softly and the nerve at the corner of his mouth began again its twitching beat. "So you are Kapper?" she said. She laughed. "The poet, Kapper."

"Yes, I am Kapper," he said angrily and defiantly.

"How annoyed my husband will be when he hears of this." She laughed. "He disapproves of you, Herr Kapper. But introduce me to your friends. Which is the artist? Your companion with the scarlet face?"

Her own face was a little flushed, perhaps

with excitement, perhaps because the brandy had gone to her head. Her enjoyment of the situation was obvious. The dignity of Kapper's bearing disappeared in anger and fear. "You will not tell him that you met me here," he said.

"But such a story," she said softly. "It's irresistible. And this picture . . ." She laughed with genuine amusement.

"You will not tell," Kapper repeated, his hand deep in his pocket. The tone and the movement attracted her attention. Still in a careless voice, as though none of these things—hot angry men, small room and peeling plaster, threats, raised voices and gross pictures—could even touch the surface mind of Anne-Marie Demassener, she said, "And do you really think my husband does not know where you meet?" With an impetuous scorn which raised a spiritual barrier between herself, the wife of the Dictator, and the three conspirators, she added, "Do you think he cares?"

Kapper lowered his eyes. Stripped of dignity and defiance he looked the more dangerous. Demassener's wife, however, paid him no more attention. She turned her back on him and

thanked Chant in a toneless and casual fashion for the brandy. "I must go home," she said, "my husband will be anxious." She stopped speaking and gazed before her with a smile as though her words had given rise to a train of thought. With irony she added, "Certainly I must not make him anxious."

Chant was puzzled, aware that here was something which he did not understand. He longed to turn over in his mind her words, recall every inflection of her voice and thus build up for her a character, yet he felt sure that at the very heart of that character was a mystery which no elaborate recollections could solve. He was interrupted in his thoughts by a movement of Kapper's, a gradual withdrawal of a hand from his pocket, a glint of metal. "Let me see you to your car," he said with haste, and moved to put himself between them.

Anne-Marie Demassener had opened a small gold powder box and was regarding her face with anxious interest in its mirror. "One moment," she said, "one moment." She began thoughtfully to powder some defect too small for any to notice but herself. "Will you go and see to the car?" she asked. Chant hesitated with his

eyes on Kapper, but a slight lift of the dark eyebrows sent him from the room. In the street a low car overlapped with its front wheels the cobbles of the square. It was apparently undamaged, though glass littered the driver's seat. After a hurried examination Chant returned to Sebastian Lintz's shop. He had been gone for a few seconds only, and at first glance nothing seemed changed. Demassener's wife still examined herself in the small mirror, moving a hair here and there infinitesimally into place. Kapper still stood behind her, but Chant saw that his hand was no longer in his pocket and that it was empty. "Your car seems undamaged," Chant said.

"Thank you." With a last regretful glance in the mirror, as though she was unwilling to leave the reflection of her countenance for the sight of a world with far less savour, she led the way from the room with no word to Kapper or his companion. Chant followed her.

In the open against the white background of the Seminary she was like a black shadow cast by a fierce moonlight. With a quick movement she turned to Chant and in a voice containing the rarified essence of excitement said,

"How I have enjoyed myself."

"You were in danger," Chant said.

"Not enough," she answered. She glanced at the driver's seat littered by the smashed glass. "But I asked you . . ." she began. Chant interrupted her. "I couldn't stay," he said. "Kapper was dangerous. You couldn't see—"

Anne-Marie Demassener laughed softly and stood with one foot on the running board, smiling into his face. "Young innocent," she said. "I saw it all in my mirror." And she added again in a concentrated fury of pleasure, "How I have enjoyed myself." She regarded him with curiosity, as though unwilling to close the encounter of the night. "Have you been in Trier long? Why are you mixed up with these people?"

"No, I only arrived to-day," Chant said. "I never thought I should have the luck so soon . . ." His eyes expressed what he had not the courage to say.

"Yes, but these people . . . I don't understand."

Chant's face lit with excitement. "We are your enemies," he said and smiled.

"You mean of my husband? He has many."

But they are so unimportant. And yet I feel he might be interested to hear of you. Shall I tell him? Will you threaten me like Kapper?"

"No, I trust you."

"You are a strange young man. You trust me to deceive my husband? And you are right, of course. Listen," again a slow smile. "Would you not like to see your enemy? There is no difficulty, you know. My husband likes to meet English visitors, and we dine alone to-morrow. This," she murmured, "is in gratitude for the most interesting evening I have spent since I married."

"Care to?" he said, and found no words to describe his good fortune before the rear light of her car flashed scarlet down the lane and disappeared. Like a beggar watching a cigarette flung lighted into the gutter, Oliver Chant stooped and peered and strained his eyes to try to trace its course.

CHAPTER III

CHANT was subdued in spirit when he approached the Electoral Palace. Long, low, magnificent, it hid itself from a plebeian world behind a screen of extravagantly carved foliage, and recognised no contact with the shoemaker's in the Jesuiten-strasse. But from that other world Chant came, to a house of peace and age and dignity, an intruder from discontent.

In a room full of mirrors and antique furniture, which gave it the air of an art gallery, a tall figure rose to greet him and flashed an image back and forth from one wall to the other. The room, dimly lit by an over-encrusted chandelier, whose dangling baubles obscured rather than reflected light, seemed less lived in than occupied by caretakers.

"Mr. ——. It is curious. My wife never told me your name."

"Chant—Oliver Chant." The two men bowed to each other gravely from a short distance, hemmed in by shadows and formal furni-

ture. It was a cold night for spring, but no fire was lit, perhaps because its dust might harm the valuables around. Chant watched with curiosity the Dictator whose ascendancy he was pledged to destroy, and seeing the blue, cloudy eyes, high forehead, fair hair devastated by grey, he hoped that the fight might be a fair one. The figure before him had once been straight. Now in its slight stoop it had compromised with age, weariness and responsibility. The pleasant voice which spoke in correct, hesitant English gave an impression that the mind was not wholly concentrated on the words said, was a little yearning after a more abiding interest.

"I must thank you, Mr. Chant, for helping my wife last night." How much does he know, Chant thought? Apparently nothing, for there was no reserve in either words or meaning, but only in the mind which had that other interest. Silence fell between them, which Demassener broke at last with an effort. "Will you not sit down?" Both men regarded with some perplexity the large, uncomfortable choice of chairs. "This place is like a pawnshop," Demassener said with a surprising laugh. The words loosened their bodies' constraint. They laughed

and moved and shook their shoulders free.

"So you only arrived in Trier yesterday?"

"Yes," Chant said. "A lovely town," but his mind was occupied with the question—how does he know that, from his wife or from another? "Lovely and quiet," he added.

Demassener laughed. "You did not expect that. You hear an exaggerated account of our affairs in England."

"The night before I left London," Chant said abruptly, "I read of two men condemned to death for carrying arms." He watched Demassener's face for some shade of embarrassment, but he was disappointed. Demassener nodded and made a casual gesture with his hands, a gesture which seemed to reprove Chant for introducing a business subject before dinner. "Yes," he said, "I remember. They were shot yesterday."

But this was incredible, Oliver Chant thought—this conversation and this situation. A grave but uninterested voice speaking of execution (or was it murder?) in the dim-lit room filled with the uncomfortable bric-a-brac of ages. For a moment the shades of Mrs. Meadmore's drawing-room imposed themselves on his surround-

ings, the wraiths of moving figures, echo of voices, young men eddying between the sandwiches and the wine, and then the street outside, Kurtz's sharp voice in the dark, the challenge of his face, "From Trier, an exile." These had been real, but now they were ghosts, and this which lay around him was the true world. Yet the true world was less credible and less substantial than were the ghosts of a week ago, less credible but less beautiful he could not say, as rising slowly from his chair he watched behind his companion's head, Anne-Marie Demassener, an image in one of the tall mirrors, step down a flight of stairs beyond the open door.

"Paul," said a low certain voice as he turned to face her. He had time to notice with a feeling of wonder that Demassener had only that moment become conscious of her approach. That was not the least incredible thing in an incredible situation—that a man should become slowly aware of so vivid a creation. To his mind too there was something a little mechanical and weary in Demassener's greeting.

Not that his brain was clear enough for any deep inquisitiveness. He only felt that in some way the pawnshop had been transformed into

the palace, that the dim ornate chandelier and the antique chairs had become suited to his mood and were the most fitting frame for the white face that now became part of the room itself, the deep wine colour of Anne-Marie Demassener's dress fading into the shadows and enriching them.

The fascination of the face made him silent at the table, round and dark, lit by candles which draped long shadows between the three of them, so that each ate in a solitude. Demassener, speaking of Trier slowly and with affection, seemed to become aware of the short responses of his guest. He looked up to see a pair of enthusiastic eyes dragging themselves reluctantly to meet his own.

"A lovely city," Chant said as he had said before, but his voice dwelt with a mixture of wonder and reverence on the adjective and the word "city" was an afterthought. He wondered whether the man in front of him had noticed his inattention. Demassener's gaze, a little amused, a little inquiring, had passed to his wife. He seemed to watch her with curiosity as he might a strange woman. "Mr. Chant," he began, "if you are staying for some days you

should climb the hills over the river and see Trier from above." His eyes returned again to his wife, who sat unaware apparently of his stare, her gaze fixed on her own hands.

"There was a time, Mr. Chant, when I would have offered myself as your guide. I was fond of walking, but nowadays I have not the time. I do not complain. My work is both friend and companion to me."

"And also wife," said Anne-Marie Demassener, breaking silence for the first time since they had taken their places. Demassener laughed and with a conciliatory motion put out his hand and covered her own. Her fingers lay as still as a sleeping animal, but when his hand shifted, they began to play a tune of almost silent taps upon the dark table.

"The town fascinates me," Chant said quickly. "I mean to stay for some weeks." Demassener's eyes, which gave an impression of brilliance clouded by habitual weariness, lit up like a lover's at the praise. He no longer looked at his wife. His temporary interest in her seemed quenched by this larger love and sharper enthusiasm. "I was born here," he said. "When I was a boy," he hesitated with

a peculiarly youthful embarrassment for a man whom work and responsibility had so clearly aged, "I used to dream of giving my life for Trier. Of course an Englishman would not understand that."

"We have no chance. The places where we live change so rapidly. We grow fond of this and that," Chant said, "and then they are gone. And our towns have never been threatened by any but ourselves. That makes a difference. It's very dangerous to one's love, security."

"That's true," said Anne-Marie Demassener, tapping with her fingers. "But then," she added because the two men had turned their faces sharply towards her, "Trier will never be secure."

"No, all its history has been stormy," Demassener said. "Yet it's as quiet and peaceful——"

"As you choose to make it," the woman interrupted. She laughed on a slightly acid note. "You must know, Mr. Chant, that my husband's love for his province is very like lust. He must possess it absolutely. It was not a quiet place three years ago under the republic."

"It was a foul place," Demassener said with

squared shoulders. His face lost humour, interest, enthusiasm and hardened into what appeared to Chant an unpleasant obstinacy. He was like a blind man who longed to destroy even his sense of sound.

"You must know, Mr. Chant, that my husband is a Puritan." She laughed with a touch of scorn. "I accept the label," Demassener replied, and if there was any expression in his voice, it was the faint echo of a defensive pride. Behind his head the window was open and the curtains were drawn back on the deep blue of the spring night. The candles, that dropped their little pools of light upon the table, combined upon the boundary of the room to leave a golden haze, through which the dark sky, like a mirror, gave back their reflection in the form of stars. The Dictator's shoulders cut off a wedge of night from Chant's vision. They seemed to him turned consciously and obstinately from beauty, just as the eyes, he was sure, avoided those of Anne-Marie Demassener. But of that Chant did not complain, able the more to concentrate himself on their shape and colour and shifting lights of gold and green and grey.

Somewhere in the square before the palace

a dog began to howl, and as though even that sound in the silence was accepted by one human being as an encouragement, very faintly from a distant house came the music of a voice singing, singing with a lingering exquisite enjoyment of sentiment. The sound dropped syllable by indistinguishable syllable into the pools of shadow round the candles. For a long moment there was silence until two people became aware of the rigid, undisturbed breathing of the third and conscious that it was only they who had held their breaths for the enduring instant and had longed to hold their hearts from beating.

"Oh," said Anne-Marie Demassener, rising with an uncontrolled movement of impatience, "I know. You do not care for music."

Demassener's back more than ever seemed to shut out the night, but it could not shut out the lonely voice which, creeping in, possessed the room with sound. Anne-Marie Demassener stood very still beside the window, her hands folded before her. Chant, all caution forgotten, stared past Demassener's head at a profile which seemed to him faultless in its fierce contrast of black hair and white skin. She said in a low

voice, so as not to obscure the sound, with wonder and with regret, "What is there wrong in this?"

"It's dangerous," Demassener said. He seemed to feel in the silence which followed his words a double antagonism and unexpectedly he added to them, as though he wished to justify himself to his companions. "Let them sing alone," he said. "If they sing in groups, they are not content with *lieder*. Song and beer combined go to their heads. They become excited, vague revolutionaries, wanting to rebel against somebody, and I am the only person against whom to rebel."

"So there are no more concerts or cabarets," Chant said. "I have discovered that already."

Demassener raised his eyes and regarded Chant with a kind of tired envy. "Do not think," he said, "that I have no understanding. It is because I do feel music that I will not have it here. Music cuts away the ground, opens impossible vistas, so that the only thing which seems worth while is to travel always in those green spaces. Water and leaves and light. But I have to tackle brick, brick. Don't you understand that? And I've got to make people

work for the State—I am working for the State—and how can I do that if all they want is water and leaves and light?” His voice shook, but his hands and body remained as firm as were his wife’s behind him.

“Words,” she murmured.

“There was another side,” he said. “All the scum of Europe was here during the Republic.”

“You are terribly afraid of freedom,” the murmur was so disembodied that it might have been the doubt of a mocking spirit inside Demassener’s own brain.

“The cabarets were nothing but filth.” The man’s face was creased by disgust, but the eyes, less controlled than face, voice or hands, kept a puzzling quality which Chant could only think was envy. “A sexual debauch,” Demassener added slowly; at the window his wife’s fingers moved restlessly across her dress.

Dinner over, they had left the fruit untasted. Chant, embarrassed by a conversation which did not skim the surface, played with a knife and tried to puzzle out why the word Puritan was unsatisfactory in its application to Paul Demassener. In that distaste with which he had re-

ferred to the closed cabarets of Trier lay something more, or perhaps less, than a stern morality. Why the shudder, Chant wondered, the envy in the eyes, and the sense of tension between him and his wife. Was there a lack of appreciation? His eyes returned to the figure by the window, and he was amazed that any man could be so blind as not to recognise that here alone lay the chief beauty of life and the chief attraction of a death which promised a deeper and an eternal communion.

The opening of the door interrupted thoughts which seemed to be drifting to an end half foreseen when he had stared at her picture many days ago.

"Captain Kraft wishes to speak to you, sir," a manservant like a military batman was saying.

"So you see," Demassener said softly, as if he were completing a sentence, "that my work has no end. Good evening, Captain Kraft." A man with a dark moustache, his face pitted with minute duelling scars, bowed three times, once to each person in the room. All his movements had the quick precision of a clockwork toy. With a kind of stony respect he waited

for Demassener to speak.

"Well, Captain Kraft, do you want to see me alone?"

Captain Kraft bowed again. "I am sorry to have disturbed you, sir. It is a matter of small importance."

"Sit down and have a glass of wine. This is Herr Chant, an English visitor." Captain Kraft bowed. "If you will excuse me, sir, I will not sit down. I have not yet been round the police posts."

"But you have something to report?"

"It is only in reference to the men who were executed yesterday."

"Please go on. Herr Chant seemed interested in that case." Demassener regarded the two men with amusement.

"The mothers are anxious to have the bodies for burial."

"That, of course," Demassener said, with an air of surprise that such a question should have been brought to him, "is impossible."

"One of them is making herself a nuisance. She is here now. She wants to see you, sir. There seems to be nothing to be done with her but lock her up."

"If she wants to see me, let her see me. Bring her up."

Captain Kraft hesitated, or rather his body remained immovable. Its quality of stiffness allowed no wavering. His eyebrows made the smallest possible movement upwards and his moustache gave the impression of bristling cautiously like the hair of a dog on the defence.

"She is a very common woman, sir."

"Anything against her?"

"Nothing is known, sir." His voice conveyed an infinite reserve of suspicion that he was too just—all his stiff back repeated that "just"—to put into words.

"Then bring her in."

Captain Kraft, Chant thought, if in civilian clothes would have allowed himself the smallest of disapproving shrugs. In uniform a rigid self-discipline forbade it. Never before had Chant seen a man who could convey disapproval so clearly without speech, movement or expression. He bowed three times and left the room, Chant made an embarrassed movement to rise. Anne-Marie Demassener, without turning her head, told him to stay where he was. "My husband," she said with a laugh that Chant was

unable to define as either amused or malicious, "will appreciate an audience."

Demassener regarded Chant with perplexed eyes. He did not refer to what his wife had said. "Isn't he an amazing man?" he remarked. "Such a complete lack of humanity. Infinite respect, of course, but nothing so human as friendship. The nearest he can get to it is disapproval. I act on purpose to arouse just that approach to humanity."

"And how daringly," Anne-Marie Demassener cried with unexpected vehemence. "Do you think this woman—this common woman—may stab you?"

"I do not understand," Demassener answered slowly, as though he hoped between every word to light on the meaning that escaped him and confused his mind with its elusiveness. "I have killed her son and I am not, like Kraft, without imagination. It seems to me that I can take credit for a little daring." He laughed uneasily.

"That is why you have her here before us? We are a kind of protection. Perhaps I had better come back to the table," Anne-Marie Demassener said, with a scorn that was now well under control. "I am no good to you here. But

has it ever occurred to you," she added softly, speaking as though to a very stupid child, "that this old woman may not be afraid of death?"

"I was not thinking of that kind of danger," Demassener replied without anger. Chant saw the muscles of his mouth stiffen and his eyes lose all expression. The door had opened and hesitating on the threshold was an incredibly tall bony old woman. Behind her a dwarfed Captain Kraft, without raising his arms held stiffly at his side, allowed his hands to make flapping motions from the wrist, as though his fingers were the ribs of a fan and the old woman a charred scrap of paper. The woman's black tailored suit, the coat hanging round her like the garment of a scarecrow, was a parody of mourning. And a parody of grief was in her face, with its high cheekbones and rapacious eyes with reddened rims. A felt hat squashed into several layers sat on the top of her grey scanty hair, and one feather drooped dismal ribs like a winter tree left bare of leaves.

"Frau Gruner?" Demassener asked. The woman, stirred from immobility by his voice, stalked forward on legs which moved in one

piece like stilts and leaning forward put a large emaciated hand on the table.

"I want my son," she said, her hand clenching and unclenching spasmodically. It seemed doubtful, if her son had then risen from the dead, whether his neck would have been embraced or wrung like a chicken's.

"Frau Gruner, you know that your son is dead."

"I want his body." From her hungry and husky voice and her hand which continued to open and shut, she might have been asking for bread—or rather demanding it, demanding the bread of life, her one inalienable privilege. Anne-Marie Demassener looked with distaste out of the window. The dog still howled, but the man no longer sang. The dog's discontent and the sound of the woman's voice wrangling for the body of her son cancelled the light of candles, the responsive gleam of silver, the warm colours of fruit, and made a desert of the room.

"Frau Gruner, you are allowed to see the body."

"I have seen the body. I want to take it away. It's not laid out properly."

"Frau Gruner, understand this. I have given

my orders and they cannot be altered. Your son is to be buried in the prison to-morrow morning." Demassener paused and then added with reluctance, "You will be allowed to lay out the body to-night in the prison."

The old woman at the sound of this small concession lost her truculence. In tones which struggled to be reasonable she explained that she was grateful, the gentleman must not think her ungrateful, but how impossible everything was. The boy's body was in a shed on a shelf. A wooden shelf, she added, as though this reinforced her case. She wanted, it became clear, to have the body laid out on a bed. A bone in her throat moved spasmodically up and down and her voice became more than ever husky. In her imagination apparently she saw her own iron bedstead with four brass knobs and the boy's body laid out with due decency facing the dusty aspidistra on the window shelf and under the terrifying embroidered text that spoke of God's omnipresence and His imminent and unexpected arrival. "I'm a religious woman," she explained, her clutching hands, gaunt frame, all but a certain agony behind the eyes, belying her faith in any religion of love.

"Why did you let your son come to this?" Demassener accused her.

"He was always wild. I had no grip on him. I did what I could."

"He intended murder."

"I did what I could," she repeated dully.

"He was an atheist."

The old woman, who had been unstirred by the accusation of murder, turned on Demassener with the speed of indignation. "He was not," she said. "The Holy Virgin knows——" Her long legs crumpled up beneath her, till she was kneeling at the table. Even then she seemed the height of an ordinary woman. Shaken by ungainly sobs, she said, "You've killed him. You want to take his soul." Rapacity gave her back strength. "You shan't do it," she cried. "I'll have a mass sung for him to-morrow in Our Lady's Church. I'll have one in the Cathedral itself." Her head flopped forward on the table, then again at a thought, reared itself. "Are you having a priest for the burial?" she asked.

"Your son was an atheist."

"I tell you he was not. He would never be such a thing. He was wild but not an atheist."

I'm his mother. I ought to know." Again her head fell forward and it was only by straining his ears that Chant could catch her whisper, "Not damned."

The embarrassed Captain Kraft made a motion towards her, but came again to attention at a sign from Demassener.

"Listen to me, Frau Gruner," Demassener said, clearly uncertain whether his words were reaching the confused mass of head and arms that sprawled across the table under the mistily-glowing candles. "I will give you leave to attend the burial in the prison to-morrow, and you may bring a priest with you if you can find one who is ready to read the service over an atheist."

The bony heap upon the table stirred and a whisper of gratitude emerged. Demassener beckoned Captain Kraft. "Give the woman a glass of wine," he said. Captain Kraft, bending slightly a protesting back, poured out with extreme care half a glass of port. His nostrils flickered and a faint look of a quite human regret stirred his face as he tapped the bundle with the tips of his fingers. It shook itself slowly and became a head, shoulders, hands. To Chant's

astonishment the eyes were dry. Frau Gruner said in a tone of indignation, "I never drink wine." For the first time she showed an interest, a suspicious, grudging envious interest in her surroundings. Her eyes dwelt for a moment on each wine glass in turn, counted them, and lighted at last with something approaching hatred on the back of Anne-Marie Demassener. Captain Kraft plucked at her sleeve and she rose. The eyes of the three men followed the progress of her head as they might have watched a hawk fly higher into the sky. Frau Gruner, in her own view, had not had a grip on her son, but she evidently had one on all the occupants of the room with the exception of the Dictator's wife, who now leaning out of the window began softly to chide the howling dog below. Frau Gruner was reluctant to leave the room. She seemed suddenly to recall, as an excuse perhaps for clinging a little longer to light and normal voices and bodies alive and not impatient for burial, that her mission had not been for herself alone.

"Frau Schultz," she asked. "Has she also leave to see her own son buried?" She had forgotten her gratitude of a moment before and tried to injure them with her irony.

Demassener for the first time made a motion of impatience. "I have given you leave, Frau Gruner. That is all."

The old woman seemed to consider a return to the table. "I promised Frau Schultz," she began, but the hesitation, the slight loosening of greed, had broken her dominion. Demassener made a sign to Captain Kraft, who seized the old woman by both arms and bundled her towards the door. On the threshold, still in urgent motion, Frau Gruner succeeded in turning her head. "Murderer," she screamed, and then the door closed on her.

"There you have an example of the gratitude of these people, Herr Chant," Demassener said.

"Do you expect gratitude when you've killed her son?" Anne-Marie Demassener swung round impatiently from the window. "Why couldn't you let the woman have the body?" With an impatience that would not wait for an explanation she left the room, leaving in the place of wrangling and movement stillness and a disquieting silence.

"I suppose you are asking the same question?" Demassener murmured at last. "And yet surely it's self-evident. There would have been a pro-

cession, speeches. There's no better form of propaganda than a weeping woman," he added with bitter vehemence, as though he had been driven by his position into an unwilling and what seemed to him an unworthy questioning of human motives. His position at the head of the table with his back to the open window emphasised his loneliness, and Chant caught for an instant a glimpse of what his motive had been in thus seeking an audience; it had been an effort to escape momentarily from the loneliness inevitable to power and to find some understanding in another. The world must have seemed always to Demassener extraordinarily crass, extraordinarily stupid, unable to understand either his motives or his difficulties. And so he had given an example, surely a plain and elementary example, of how his mind was forced to work for no other reason but that he was the Dictator of Trier, to his wife and a stranger and neither had understood. Chant had a strange feeling that he had failed the man.

"What do they say about me in England?" The voice was low, tired and defensive. "I expect I can tell you. I have a French wife, so I am helped by the French. I am a traitor

to Germany. I am a tyrant. At least, Herr Chant, you can see that I don't shelter myself behind my officers."

Chant was silent. He could not tell the man how totally disregarded he was in England. The news of his *coup d'état*, a few personalities in the cheaper papers, and then silence.

A thin hand pushed a cigarette box towards Chant. "I don't know who you are, Herr Chant," the voice began again. "I have had many newspaper men from your country to see me. Why they come I don't know. They have all brought with them their preconceived notions, and they have taken them back unchanged. Couldn't they have saved the expense of travel? Are you going to go back, Herr Chant, and write that I am a man 'greedy for power?' That is the phrase they have ready made for any Dictator. It is useless to convince them that I am only waiting, holding this province in trust for Germany. But not for a Republican Germany. I have saved Trier from a Republic."

"I am not a journalist," Chant said.

"What a pity, Herr Chant. What a pen picture of injustice I have just given you. A mother begging for the body of her son, and

she was only granted the right of seeing it buried."

"And one woman not so much as that."

"You wonder what my reason was, Herr Chant. Well, I will tell you. Frau Schultz was a brothel-keeper till I destroyed her trade." He waited for a comment and when none came added slowly, "She is outside humanity."

"I don't understand that," Chant said.

"No? It sometimes seems to me that I am the only man existing who can see these things as they must appear to a God who is not smirched by living in the world." He turned on Chant a face aged by disgust. "I can see what you are thinking, that I am mad, that power has turned my head. Herr Chant, what a pity you are not a journalist. I am giving you a valuable interview. I tell you this. I hate freedom; freedom means freedom for the animal in man. I would bind men in clean chains."

"You will lose," Chant said. "You have the whole world against you."

"Yes? That is the highest compliment you can pay me. And yet I have got thus far," he added softly, and his face shed its years as pride took the place of disgust. "They hate me as a

Puritan, Herr Chant, but they respect me, and nothing can shake my position while they respect me. They find it very hard, my enemies, to make libels against me. There's a little man in this town, Herr Chant, a Jew, who spends his time writing filthy verses about me. I leave him alone, for no one believes them. He hates me because I have treated him like the brothel keeper and taken away his trade. He was a writer of pornography."

"I have heard him spoken of in London," Chant said with desperation, "as a great poet." He was defending something infinitely dear to him, which was not Kapper nor any vague privileges of art, but his mission, his only hope of escape from a life of which he had grown inexpressibly tired, a life without meaning, without risk and without beauty. In that life there had been nothing worthy of reverence or defence. And now with a deliberate fanaticism the man before him was destroying the merit of his object and making it seem an almost evil thing that he had come to Trier to league himself with such a man as Kapper against the husband of Anne-Marie Demassener.

Demassener was laughing with a certainty in

his own opinion that came near to enraging Oliver Chant. "If you stay long enough in Trier you may meet him. One look at him will be sufficient." Chant drew a breath of relief, for here without question was a shallowness of judgment, for what man could be judged by a look? Not Demassener, surely, who had at one moment been a tired, courteous gentleman, and at another an old man disgusted with all the world. Nor Joseph Kapper, who with a twisted dignity had faced the beauty of Anne-Marie Demassener and refused her the help she demanded.

"He had a certain power during the Republic," Demassener continued, dropping his words slowly with the force of well-timed blows, while Oliver Chant, shutting the eyes of his spirit, tried to make himself deaf, dumb and blind. "He's half mad now, I believe, from jealousy, but he's negligible." The nervous fingers brushed across the table, casting a taut shadow between the fruit and the wine. "There was only one man who was a real danger, and I turned him out. A man called Kurtz. Under happier circumstances we could have been friends. He loved the Palatinate in his own

way, the wrong way. He was infinitely better than the men he tried to lead."

Demassener leant forward across the table and said appealingly, "Would it interest you, Herr Chant, to hear how I came to be in this position? Or are you satisfied with what your newspapers say?"

Chant did not reply. He would not for one moment admit to himself that he had more than heard the Dictator speak, that he had distinguished words and their meaning. I have come to Trier, he thought, to fight for the humble and the wronged. They are not my kind as this man is, but I have come in their service and I will not listen to him.

"It is not true, Herr Chant, that I have ever taken money or help of any kind from France. The truth is otherwise. When the French evacuated Trier and the Rhineland, three years ago, it was the republicans who received the money. I do not say that the French Government helped them, but there were plenty of officers in the French army who were too patriotic to let the Palatinate go back to us without a struggle. Some of the old Separatists were still in Trier. All they needed was money—

they were given it—arms—there was some carelessness in the removal of armaments—and supporters—a flood of international scallywags from the French ports. So the great free Republic was formed at Trier, and I can tell you we had our fill of freedom. We were the brothel of Europe.”

“I should have thought,” Chant murmured, and so admitted to himself that he had heard Demassener, “that freedom was worth a little license.”

“Nowhere, Herr Chant, and least of all here. This is a holy town. It is not a mere question of our history and our relics. Go out into the streets and count the shops filled with sacred images. They are innumerable.”

“Old women . . .”

“Yes, and old men too, and not the young. So much the worse for the young. Well, I have set myself to defend the old.”

“The young must win in the end. I don’t understand how they ever let you take this power.”

“It was not I, Herr Chant. It was a dead man. It was then that I learnt the use of funerals. Of course we had been preparing for

a long time. I had money to spend, but I was not then the leader. He was my friend. You will have heard of him, Struber. He was sitting one evening in a café in the market place just opposite the fountain, when three young workmen came in. They called out "Is Herr Struber here?" He got up and bowed to them. Two of them went across to his table and the third put out the light. There was a shot and when a waiter turned on the light, Struber, of course, was dead. We knew then that our plans were known. We organised a funeral, and nothing was done to prevent us. Kurtz and his friends did not realise the use of funerals. Our procession started with only fifty mourners behind the coffin and those included Struber's widow and his three children. Before we reached the cemetery of St. Mathias there were a thousand of us. We returned from the cemetery still in procession, but we had left the women and children in the church. It was not until we had almost reached the market place that anyone realised that we were armed. There was not even a fight. Most of their supporters were the scourgings of Europe and they ran until we got them cooped up in the horse-market. We did

not fire a shot. Kurtz was in that old red building at the corner of the market. Do you know what he was doing when we found him? He was weeping, Herr Chant, and yet he was the only one of them that was not a coward. That was why I sent him away. After that, we cleaned up Trier." He stopped speaking and remained for a moment silent. Chant made no reply, still trying to evade the doubt which the Dictator's words had raised, a doubt which, if he allowed it to grow, would, he felt, destroy the suddenly discovered object in life, the sense of dangerous walking, and above all else, the sight of Anne-Marie Demassener.

That last he felt could least of all be relinquished, as he stood beside Demassener outside the open door of the electoral drawing-room, that mortuary of ancient furniture, and watched a ghost with white transparent skin, shadowed by the dark hair, turn, with what seemed to him an infinite grace of moving fingers, dead wood to music. "Shall we join my wife?" Demassener had said, and they had walked into this wonder.

"Music is allowed somewhere in Trier," Oliver Chant whispered in a kind of restrained

anger to the man whom he had remembered was the husband of the ghost and had a proprietary interest in beauty. Demassener gazed at him with perplexity and towards his wife with curiosity. "Don't you admit its danger now?" he said.

It was not only the ignoring back of Anne-Marie Demassener that Chant found himself able to watch. Above the piano a mirror in an old gilt frame gave back a deeply placed image, a little blurred as though seen through tears or through dazzled eyes. It was some moments before Chant realised that he was not the only watcher, that the eyes staring back at him from the mirror observed his own reflection, while the fingers continued to dip down towards the notes as into a dark pool. There was a sense of curious intimacy in this mutual gaze, as it were at second hand, this touch through glass.

The music over, both men passed the threshold and the image in the mirror flashed and turned and the living woman faced them. Chant waited with apprehension to see who would be the first to break the moment with a trivial and inadequate phrase.

"You have been a long time," said Anne-Marie Demassener, and Oliver Chant discovered that after all no phrase was inadequate spoken by those lips. "A long time," he repeated with such regret that the man beside him laughed, and it was laughter that proved itself trivial and not words.

"I am afraid I wearied you, Herr Chant," Demassener said.

"Oh, no, I could never tire of hearing how you came to be in this place. In this room," he added softly, his eyes on Anne-Marie Demassener, his words spoken slowly as though in a difficult dream. To his joy he had found her eyes, gold, green and grey, and now he was afraid to relinquish them, as he might have feared to put a precious stone into a stranger's hand. He felt a peculiar warmth, happiness and peace throughout his body. It might be the sight of Anne-Marie Demassener or it might be the wine he had drunk, for while he had tried to evade the meaning of the Dictator's words he had mechanically and without pleasure emptied several glasses.

"Paul," she said, and the peace of Chant's body was a little broken by this reminder of

another's possession, "Paul, Herr Chant should be returning to his hotel. It will soon be midnight."

"Play a little more first," Chant begged. He was rewarded by a quick smile, but it was the whole of his reward. She glanced at the watch on her wrist and shook her head. "The Dictator's orders must be obeyed," she commented with irony. "But, Herr Chant, we must see you again. Last night's meeting," she smiled at him with the intimacy of a secret shared, "was an amusing coincidence. It must not be allowed to lapse."

"It shall not," he broke out again in an enthusiasm which he found it hard to control. And yet he was forced to leave the room with no further meeting arranged and with the knowledge increasingly importunate that soon no further meeting would be possible. While his eyes had held hers, the possession of that jewel had driven from his memory all thought of his mission and all remembrance that he was her husband's enemy. Now he remembered; yet even the puzzled pain of the thought was less to him than the illogical angry bitterness which he felt at leaving the two alone in an everyday

intimacy. What will they be doing now, he wondered, dwelling with a kind of hungry jealousy on imagined caresses, on hands held out and open lips, on touch and taste.

From round the corner of the palace came a slow, sweet scent, an impression of blossom climbing through the dark. He said to the manservant, who waited beside the open door for him to step into the night, "Is there no way through the garden?"

Oh, yes, the man said, but in the dark Herr Chant would find it hard to see the gate. "I would risk more than that," Chant said, "to see the flower that makes that scent," and the servant led him down the passage to the garden door. If Herr Chant crossed the lawn, he explained, past the cedar he would find a gate in the wall exactly opposite the drawing-room windows. He would come out into the road not far behind Our Lady's Church. With a glance back at the lighted passage as though he expected to see some sign that bells had rung unanswered, he said, "I will show you, sir."

But no, Chant told him, there was no need.

"The gate may be locked."

"Then I will come back or climb the wall."

The man smiled as he closed the door, and with shame Chant wondered whether his real motive was obvious even to a servant. The man might be watching at this moment from a window, waiting to see Chant approach the house again. It angered him that the commonness of his emotion should be emphasised by a servant's quick discernment.

"I will show him he is wrong," he thought, and without looking at the windows behind him, aware of them only by the vivid green of the lit grass, he crossed the lawn. The gate was locked.

When he turned, uncertain what to do, he saw the flowers. Under the lighted windows hung great blooms of magnolia, glimmering like a heap of snow mysteriously built in a spring night. A drift of petals was taken by the wind to fall across the grass. He approached with caution to bathe his hands and face in cold fragrance. When he raised himself to touch a flower he saw Paul Demassener. His back was turned toward the window, and the thin hands were clasped together with an appearance of nervous restraint. Chant thought him alone.

Suddenly Demassener spoke with the awk-

wardness of a solitary man: "Won't you play a little for me now?" There was no reply. Chant did not move. Any moment now might afford the sight for which he longed. He had no feeling of guilt. He could hear every word which was spoken, but there was no sense of intimacy between the two. It might have been the husband who had left the room and the stranger who remained.

"You know," Paul Demassener said, still with the effect of awkwardly seeking a response, "that boy's in love with you."

Then Anne-Marie Demassener's voice: "Even that is a little refreshing in this place."

For a moment it seemed to Chant that Paul Demassener was shedding his personality, throwing on one side for that instant all his love of an abstract town, all his hatred of human frailty, his responsibility, weariness, suspicion, his knowledge of the work before him and behind him and around him. With the loosening of his hands and an altered set of the shoulders he became a young man, a stranger, seeing his wife for the first time. "I love you, too," he said in the half-strangled voice of a forgotten personality claiming some sort of re-

cognition before a final death.

She came towards him and into Chant's view who watched with a rarefied and unlustful hunger how the dress moulded itself to her as she approached. But she stopped and spoke and questioned, asking what he meant with a mixture of curiosity and hope and disbelief.

"What does a man generally mean?" Demassener said and moved and took her in his arms and shattered the moment. Anne-Marie Demassener waited without response, as his gesture of passion seemed to turn furtive and ashamed. Over her husband's shoulder she stared impassively across the room, as though she played a part which had become too familiar to stir her. The petals of the flower obscured his sight, but Chant believed that her breast moved only with the slow casualness of breath. He watched absorbed by actions which were too mysterious for his interpretation. What more does he want? he thought. If I were he—, and raising himself still higher towards the window, he was suddenly conscious that Anne-Marie Demassener had seen him. Her eyes had met his and had as suddenly moved away. She threw back her head, and with the effect of striking a blow at the

face which watched her from the garden, offered her mouth to her husband. At once he loosed her and stepping back with an air of despairing dignity made her a small bow. "I am sorry," he said, "and yet you know I love you." "Oh, yes." She laughed at him. "I know. I recognise the touch."

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"What does it matter to you?" she said. Her voice was shaking a little, as though she held her laughter with difficulty. "I want some air after this room. What right have you to ask me where I am going?" She beat her hand up and down on the handle of the door, as if she were trying to find words to express her meaning. But she seemed uncertain what it was she wished to express, weariness, contempt, pain, or only perhaps an unbearable boredom. She opened the door and before she went flung at the turned back of the Dictator of the Palatinate one phrase, "I have waited long enough," that made the tired shoulders stiffen and the head go back in a mixture of pride and defiance.

Chant turned from the window and crossed the lawn. He did not know clearly whether his emotion was one of hope or fear, but he had

barely reached the shadow of the cypress when the door into the garden opened and Anne-Marie Demassener stepped quickly on to the lawn.

"You *have* come," he said in such a voice of wonder, almost fear, as might belong to an unbeliever whose mechanical prayer had been completely granted.

"What do you mean?" she asked, seeming to drag her mind with difficulty and even a little pain from the circle of her thoughts.

"Why, I had hoped—I mean . . ." He stood in an undignified hesitation.

"I thought you were back at your hotel."

"I couldn't leave you like that," he explained with difficulty. "I wanted to see you again, if only through a window. O, but I hoped and prayed," he added in a rush of words, "for this."

"I still don't understand," Anne-Marie Demassener said with a slightly exaggerated gesture of a hand to her brow. "All this to see me through a window." Both turned to gaze at the one lighted yellow square that broke the long shadow of the palace.

Chant came nearer. "It seemed to me," he said, "almost incredible that you shouldn't

come. And yet now that I see you it's just as unbelievable. But I hoped . . .” He faced a questioning and somewhat cynical smile; that it was a smile at all he found encouraging. “What an excitement,” he said, “to be so beautiful, to know that whatever . . .” He stopped before her astonished stare. It was not as though she were amazed at his praise—that she may be said to have brushed uninterestedly aside as her due—she seemed astonished that anyone could consider that beauty ever bore with it excitement, any escape from a humdrum world which included men's praise.

With a motion of the shoulders and a deep indrawing of the breath, she said, “I am so bored.”

“As the wife of Paul Demassener,” he said with jealousy and an unwilling admiration.

For almost the first time that evening she looked at him with the curiosity she might have been expected to show to any human being. He saw himself grow before her eyes from an impersonal voice to an individual filled with this one amazing idea that to be the wife of Demassener was an enviable and exciting thing.

Caution had been banished either by the sight

of her or by the wine. "You know," Chant said, "I had two objects in coming to Trier, and one of them was you."

"Me? But surely we've never met." She seemed to despair of any escape to coolness in a confusing world.

"A photograph in a paper."

"Those things," she said, scornfully. "And what was your other object?"

"That I mustn't tell you," he said, with a belated caution that only aroused her curiosity.

"A secret? But remember. I have surprised one of your secrets."

"If you only knew," he said with intensity, "how unimportant that object has become. To have seen you——" He made a gesture with his hand that only his evident sincerity saved from the theatrical. He stepped closer from the shade. "You'll think me drunk," he said in a low, rather husky voice, "but I——" he laughed nervously, afraid that he was behaving too seriously, forearming himself against rebuff—"I'm infatuated by you." He saw her eyes turn back towards a square of yellow light before she allowed herself to reply to his ardour with an equal, but older and more conscious

intensity. Then she pushed him away and was gone, while he was still unable to disentangle his desire from the general vague scent of magnolia and of spring or to find words for either his passion or his surprise.

CHAPTER IV

CHANT stood for what seemed a long while measured by the triumphant career of his thoughts. He wanted to sing and would have been satisfied to shout. He broke a branch of cold bloom and held the flower to his mouth, comparing its passivity with the unexpected and inexplicable response of Anne-Marie Demassener.

It was the sound of a deep bell ringing which reminded him of a world with rules that not even a lover could ignore. The time of curfew had passed, and he must reach the gasthaus without attracting the notice of the police. Confused by the sudden widening of horizons he had forgotten the mission on which he had come to Trier. As he scrambled into the square over a strip of wall he had none of the feelings or the caution of a conspirator. He was wondering when he would next see Anne-Marie Demassener and how he should greet her. It seemed incredible that he must treat her as a stranger, at

the best as an acquaintance of a day. His brain was stirred by a medley of hopes, fears and plans. He would go to the palace the next day and ask her to return with him to England; he would leave Trier at once rather than destroy that wild, slender image by any hackneyed intrigue.

It was through a vision made up of flowers, dark hair and exciting lips that he became slowly conscious, as he stood in the shadow of the palace wall, of a green-uniformed police officer staring in his direction from under a lamp. The man had heard him but could see nothing. With a hand on his revolver holster he came slowly across the square and at first Chant waited for him. It was when the policeman was not more than twenty yards away, a young man with shiny black gaiters and head a little thrust forward, like an entomologist seeking some rare and ill-discerned moth, that Chant realised the difficulty of his position. For if he waited and told the officer that he had been dining at the palace he would be taken before Demassener, and then he must explain why it was that he had not gone straight to his gasthaus. That, he thought, would not be difficult were it not for the coincidence that Anne-Marie Demas-

sener had left her husband alone at the same unexplainable time.

The corner of the square was ten yards away. By keeping close to the wall Chant turned it without leaving the shadows. The young officer, still with head thrust forward, came half-way across the square and stood hesitating. A dozen explanations of the noise, visions of cats and dogs and crumbling masonry, must have raced through his mind, tried to persuade him of the futility of seeking further, and if there was any knowledge of the future underneath the conscious, dutiful, listening brain, tried with a certain desperation. But Oliver Chant was a little drunk and very triumphant. His lodging was less than half a mile away, and he had no respect for the law which he was breaking. The chase began to appear in the light of a game. He picked up a pebble and flung it so that it struck a wall behind the officer's head. The man swung round and Chant continued on his way. A moment later his foot missed the kerb, and he sprawled on his knees in the road.

He heard a cry of "*Halt!*" and the race of feet. The moment of kneeling in the gutter spread into a desert of time as he waited for a

bullet in the back. That the shot did not come relieved him from more than his physical fear; it revived the sensation that they were playing a child's game. Before the officer turned the corner of the square, Chant had slipped into a doorway. The man ran past for more than a dozen yards and gave Chant a start in a race back across the front of the palace. He waved his hand at one bright patch of light which sprang suddenly out of the dark in the hope that somewhere behind it lay Anne-Marie Demassener. He was fully exposed now as he crossed between two lamps and beneath a Virgin and Child carved in a small alcove of wall, yet no shot came, though he could hear the sound of his pursuer's feet not far behind. Perhaps the officer had entered into the spirit of the game; more probably it was because he was gaining foot by foot and could afford to wait. Mrs. Meadmore's drawing-room had been no training ground for an athlete. Round another corner, down twenty yards of welcome darkness, a quick turn to the right and a race across a patch of light, but still the pursuer gained. Chant grew nervous. He had from the first avoided the Brode-strasse for fear of meeting other police officers, and now, with a

turn here and a turn there, he was lost. He heard a number of whistles blowing like thin draughts in the night, but he could no more judge their direction than a man can locate a single bird by its song in a crowded spring. The following footsteps broke their continuity at another corner, hesitated, ceased. Chant stepped into an alley between two houses and listened with pounding heart for the sounds to be renewed. The silence remained unbroken; but he was aware of the still presence a few yards away, where two streets forked, of his pursuer who must be listening also, wondering which route to follow. The chase had whipped Chant's nerves into excitement; now a small cold wind, such as can always worm its way into the kernel of the warmest spring, chilled him where he stood. With every moment of unrewarded attention his flight lost something of its gaiety.

Presently a faint, regular scratching began at the entrance to the alley. Chant feared to shift his feet, lest even that small sound should betray him. Leaning forward, he let the darkness discard film after film of obscurity, until he could see the thin, patient shape of a black

cat sharpening its claws on the brickwork of the wall. Chant made cautious, useless movements with his hands towards it. The sound was like that of a man struggling to light a match on a damp box. He was afraid that the officer might hear and by a misconception stumble on his hiding place. Again he gestured at the ignoring cat.

A step on the pavement drove Chant closer into the narrow alley, pressed his back against the wall, doubled him into a small space. A ray of light from an electric torch touched the entrance of the passage, illuminating the hand that held it and, as it circulated, the face of the police officer. It was a thin, clean-shaven face, with prominent cheekbones and long fair lashes. A number of small lines round the mouth indicated not age but an easy mirth. It was a face that Chant could not take seriously as an enemy's, calling as it did for conversation and a joke or two. The light moved up and down each of the walls in turn, penetrating always a little further towards the place where Chant crouched. Five feet more, Chant thought, and the end will come, and he wondered whether to surrender or rush on the officer and risk what he

considered a very improbable shot. But his decision was postponed. The light fell on the cat, and paying no attention to the bleak white ray, it continued to sharpen its claws with a kneading motion on the wall.

The officer shifted the torch to his left hand, and the light disclosed for a moment the deepening lines of amusement round a mouth impetuous for laughter. Then the dark, vague shape of his body crouched towards the ground, and a hand broke into the space of light and began to ruffle the fur behind the cat's ears. The cat arched its back in reluctant pleasure and approached him, until the two shapes merged into one ragged mass of deeper darkness. Chant rose on his toes, took a few quiet springing steps, and then, discarding caution, ran the intervening feet and jumped over the kneeling man. Round the corner he came face to face with another officer and doubled back. The two men's whistles competed in the night. Thin threads of sound, they pulled invisible wires that commanded and set playing a distant orchestra. Chant turned two more corners and could no longer hear the hurrying footsteps. After the race of feet and the momentary burst of sound

the air was quiet, and Chant was unalarmed at the thought that he was lost. He fell into a walk between leaning houses that shut him off from the night sky and any inquisition of the stars. Dark façades stretched before him, showing no glimmer of light to indicate that men in Trier, even under a puritanical Dictator, continued to read and drink and enjoy their women.

The street was a long one and Chant could not tell when he first became conscious, if the term can be applied to an uneasy and irrational suspicion, that someone followed him. He could hear nothing; his sensation was no more than a primeval shudder of the spine. He remembered that, a few moments before, he had heard, but had not noted, a faint "click" which might have been the cautious closing of a door. Uneasily he realised that he had come into a poor quarter of the city, a quarter of peeling stucco and broken windows with sprouting rags. He longed to turn but was afraid to reveal his fear. That his follower was not a police officer he could tell by the stealthiness of the approach, and he began to remember the thin, mirthful face of his former pursuer with a certain amity.

This district, he reflected without irony, is badly policed. The long street curved and at its end, a glimmer that cast no more radiance than a single candle in a cathedral nave, appeared a street lamp. Behind was a bank of untidy earth and a wooden fence. Only the unobstructed view of the hills beyond disclosed the presence of the Moselle. Chant quickened his step, glad at last to find an indication of his whereabouts. He thought—though he heard nothing—that behind him someone had imitated his movement. Then a foot stumbled on a loose stone and he was certain.

Before him down the street, as he began to run, the light symbolised all the safe, unappreciated, kindly things of life. Not even the dark and intensely alive image of Anne-Marie Demassener could so allure him. Smooth lawns and trees, rivers and deserted hills, sleep and the murmur of familiar voices were all held momentarily fixed as a panorama of peace in that radiance. He ran with pricking spine and ran the faster when beneath the lamp appeared the police officer from whom, he thought now, it had been the height of folly to escape.

When the man realised that Chant had seen

him yet still approached, he waited with an air of surprise and perplexity. Chant's run declined into a rapid walk, and ignorant how shadowy he seemed, how untouched he was by light, he tried to express in his face his friendship and something of the danger which he believed followed him. He searched his mind for stray scraps of German, but was rewarded only by a few irrelevant verses, some lines of Heine and a cloudy profundity of Goethe's. He gestured with his hands as he had gestured to the cat but with better result, for the human being seemed to understand that the figure which was approaching him so obscurely was a friend's. The man smiled and moved forward, till he stood at the top of the steps cut in the bank of rusty earth. At the same time a hissing sound, like the noise of air released under shallow water, passed close behind Chant's ear. The officer's smile became suddenly without meaning or intelligence, a mechanical and permanent grimace. He put a hand on his holster and jerked at the fastenings of his collar. Then his knees gave way so slowly that he might have been letting himself down stiffly in a church to pray. He was still kneeling when Chant climbed up beside

him, with his head hanging down between his knees and blood dripping from the corner of his mouth. It was evident that he was dead.

Chant felt sick and ashamed. For the first time he found himself responsible for a man's death. The thought, and the conflicting visions of the laughing mouth and the sculptured grimace, destroyed for the moment his own feeling of danger. He knelt by the body, as though he intended to join the dead man in a silent Communion, but the pool of blood welled towards him, so that he scrambled again to his feet in fear of contamination. It was then, as he wheeled distractedly round, trying to snatch some clue to action from the air, the sky, the leaning house fronts and the stars, that he became aware of the figure of Joseph Kapper, silent and abstracted a few feet below him. A revolver drooped like a parched flower to the pavement.

When at last Kapper spoke, his high thin tone contrasted strangely with his physical immobility. "You fool," he said. He seemed to lift his eyes with difficulty from the kneeling figure.

"But why did you do it?" Chant protested

with feebleness against the futility and amazement of death.

"I could not have you taken," Kapper said. "You would have been sent out of the country. What was that?" he whispered, his face twitching into movement, as a clatter of feet on distant cobbles passed from a silence and into a silence again. Both men remained for a long time listening, and then both became aware simultaneously of the revolver's witness. Kapper with reluctance slipped it into his pocket.

"What are you doing out at this hour?" he said. "I've followed you all down the street. This is your fault. Do you think I wanted to kill the man?" His hands were palsied. "It can't stay here," he said, "we must put it in a doorway. No, no, that won't do. I live too close. They'll trace me. In the river. That's what we must do. Drop it in the river. The current will carry it down."

Neither of them made any movement towards the body. Each waited for the other to act. Then Kapper said with angry intensity, "You see, you've got what you wanted. Here's your revolution. Do you think it better than my way?" With an echo of pride and grandilo-

quence he added, "I am a poet, not a fighter."

"Let's quarrel afterwards," Chant said, though he had no heart for any dispute. "We can't waste time," but again their preliminary movements towards action were frozen by the clatter of a lifted shutter and the voices of a man and woman debating hotly some sordid question in a sordid room.

The renewal of silence jerked them both into simultaneous movement. They bent together towards the body, but their hands recoiled from the dark patches that the dead man's clothes continued to absorb. Chant straightened. "Wait," he said. "This is dangerous." He welcomed wholeheartedly the delay that caution imposed. A dozen steps took him across the parade of red earth to the fence above the Moselle. So empty was the river of any passing light, so dark and unreflecting of any star, that he recognised the presence of water only where a constant movement of ripples was made visible in the circumscribed glow from the street lamp. Up and down the parade he stared and saw only varying degrees of darkness and heard nothing but his own hurried breathing.

He came back to the body and with a motion of the head indicated that everything was safe. He could not trust his voice to whisper. He feared that if he spoke at all he would shriek up towards the leaning, cracked and open windows, disturbing even the squalid quarrels and the sordid love-making. Again reluctantly they bent towards the body, Chant to the feet and the Jew to the head. When lifted, it sagged and fell into awkward, heavy shapes, like a half-filled sack of logs. They let it drop back upon the earth twice before they reached the fence, and even when they had it propped against the wooden bars, with dangling comedian's head full in the lamplight, their chief difficulty lay before them. The Jew was short with a small reach of arm, and Chant was weakened by physical nausea; only fear kept him upright and his arms bent to the task.

"Can't we push him over the fence and have done?" he asked, impatient to lose the grimace and the stale smell of congealing blood.

"No, no," Kapper said, his voice breaking a little higher than a whisper. "It will only roll down the bank into shallow water. The current won't catch it. We must throw it in."

"But how? He's heavy. Oh, I'm sick of this. Let's run."

"Can't you keep your voice low?" the Jew snapped at him.

"Be quiet yourself. You can be heard a mile away. I didn't do this. I'm going."

Kapper caught his arm. "I'm sorry. We mustn't quarrel. Listen. We'll climb on to the fence. We can swing it out into the current from there."

Standing upon the fence at a height of three or four feet from the ground they felt as exposed to all the world as if they were on the skyline of a mountain. It seemed incredible that all Trier was not watching them bend to their dark burden, lift it with difficulty and swing it abruptly and awkwardly into the river. Before the splash had ceased to explode into their ears they had scrambled down the steps and were crouching close into the shadow of the bank, waiting for cries or for the stumble of running feet. But their ears were aware of nothing; their senses alone caught the sound of silence lapping back.

"Listen," Kapper said in a whisper so low that Chant was forced unwillingly to lean his

face close to the Jew's, "I'm going to run to my house now. It's only fifty yards away. You must follow, but be quiet, run on your toes." Bending his face towards his stomach as though he wished to compress himself into an indistinguishable bundle, he began to run.

They did not speak again, until, the door shut fast, they faced each other in a narrow, unlighted passage, with the momentary friendliness of relief. "Thank God for that," the Jew said with no sense of the incongruity of his words. "We managed well, Herr Chant," and Chant echoed his words. "Now for a light." Kapper struck a match and held it to an unprotected gas jet that crooked its elbow from the wall a few inches above his head. The blue, emaciated flame picked out unerringly the peeling wall paper, damp patches on the wall, a hat stand which bent like a wind-swept scarecrow beneath its load of cloth, a clothes brush dangling from a nail. This is respectability, the light seemed to gesticulate, choosing these shabby emblems with the same undeviating cruelty as the street lamp had lit on the body's fixed grimace with the demonstration that this was death.

"Do you live here?" Chant asked, puzzled by the mystery of respectability which was answered for him not by Kapper but by the opening of a door. Both men jumped at the sound. Lit up in the doorway by a duplicate blue flame a pale, thin woman with grey untidy hair watched them with open mouth.

Kapper advanced towards her, waving his hands impatiently. "Get two glasses of brandy," he said, "and quickly." She seemed to have no substance, to blow back before his approach as a garment, a pale, washed-out garment, might blow back from its line before a gust of wind.

She came to a stop by a wooden table, on which she recoiled. She said in a whisper, that conveyed in its caution all the promiscuity of thin walls and crowded rooms, "Joseph, where have you been?"

"Didn't I tell you to get the brandy?" he called to her shrilly, as though all a black night, and not a strip of green linoleum, lay between them. She seemed too frightened to move, and Kapper himself opened a cupboard in the wall and found a bottle and glasses.

"Have you been out with a woman?" she asked hopefully.

Kapper paused with the bottle raised and turning his head towards her snapped out, "Don't you wish I had? No," he pointed at Chant, "we've been killing a policeman."

Chant started forward. "I had nothing to do with it," he said angrily. "You fired. I'm sick to death of the whole lot of you."

The woman's mouth fell further open disclosing a few broken teeth. She put a hand up to her forehead and leant forward in an attitude of complete weariness.

"It was your fault," Kapper said. "You would have been arrested. What were you doing out so late?"

What indeed? Chant echoed to himself. How could I tell that flowers and night and a passion that seemed to be returned could end like this? and he gazed around in stupefaction, a broken chair, a wooden table, peeling walls becoming inextricably confused with a bush of snow and a lighted window and footsteps on the grass.

"Take this," Kapper said, and his lips stung at the touch of brandy.

"I'm all right," Chant said. "I don't want your brandy," and snatching the tumbler he let

it fall from his fingers, so that it shattered on the floor. The gleam and tingle of the breaking glass made the nerves jump and three figures leap upright into a triangle of hostility.

"Joseph, who is this man?" the woman implored.

"A coward," Kapper said, "a cowardly Englishman. If you were not afraid that you would be traced . . ." His voice quivered into silence and the tip of his tongue began to caress his lips. "I am a poet," he added, "I am not used to this. Listen, we must be friends. Why are we quarrelling? We have forgotten something." His voice became shrill again. "They will trace us, I tell you." He turned to the woman. "You," he said, "you. You talk and talk and ask questions. Why cannot you help? Listen, you must do something. Get water, a scrubbing brush. Herr Chant, don't you see? We have left blood on the ground."

Chant plunged his hands into his pockets, to hide the rhythmical jump, jump of the nerves. "That's useless," he protested. "She will be seen. Perhaps the stains will not be found."

Kapper turned his back angrily and im-

patiently. "Listen, Bertha," he said. "Have you any meat in the house, any uncooked meat?"

"Are you hungry?" the woman said, rising and moving towards a cupboard in the wall. "You must let me have a mark for the gas meter." Two spots of bright pink appeared on the tips of her cheekbones, and the voice that had accepted the murder of a policeman with only an accentuated weariness flared with anger. "You never leave me enough money for the gas," she cried. "I sit here in the cold, hungry, for want of a mark for the meter, while you go out on your filthy pleasures." The "filthy pleasures" took shape in Chant's mind as the kneeling body of a young man with dripping mouth.

"You fool, you fool," Kapper raised two twitching hands into the air, as though to call his ancestral God to witness the inconceivable folly of womankind, "I am not hungry. I do not want a meal. Raw meat. Fetch me some raw meat."

The woman opened the cupboard and pulled out upon a tin tray a blue, tangled mass of raw liver. Kapper put his fingers into the pile, chose a strip and with an air of satisfaction watched it

dribble into the tray.

"I, Kapper," the Jew boasted, "will again save you. Admit that I am ingenious. What better man than Kapper could you have at your side in an emergency?" He let the sodden mass fall and wiped his fingers upon his coat. "Oh, yes, others can shoot straight, but they have not the brains. Listen, Bertha, you must take this meat down the road. Just past Frau Ertzüger's you will find the stains. You must throw the meat over them." He explained to Chant. "In the morning the street cleaners will find the meat. They will think that someone has fallen on the way from the butcher. They will sweep up the mess and if underneath there are any stains, they will imagine it comes from the meat and will make no report." He swung round. "Why have you not gone, Bertha?"

The flush still on her face, the woman said, "It is after curfew."

Kapper beat his hands together. "Of course it is after curfew. Do you think I am a fool? No one will see you. Only be quick."

"You must give me a mark for the gas meter."

"What has the meter to do with it? I tell you to go."

"Why should I sit here cold, hungry, for want of a mark? Do you expect me to eat raw meat like an animal?" The brief vitality of anger gone, she whined at them. "I will not go unless you give me a mark for the meter."

"But I have no mark. Woman," again the hands raised in a kind of prophetic supplication or denunciation, "do you want us to be caught and shot?"

"I want a mark. I tell you I have nothing for the gas meter."

"Take up that meat and go," Kapper's voice rose in an unimpressive scream.

"Not till you give me a mark."

Chant pulled a handful of small change from his pocket. Reluctantly, because by the act he seemed to identify himself with murder and deceit, he offered a coin. "Here is a mark."

It was amazing the confidence which that cowardly and characterless woman had gained from the sense that she was necessary to them. If all his mind had not been filled with disgust and apprehension, Chant would have discerned the pathos in her unwonted confidence. That

moment must have been the first in which Bertha Kapper felt herself necessary for any purpose whatever. Her earlier hopeful question, "Have you been with a woman?" indicated clearly enough that even her sex was unneeded.

Now she stared with dull greed at the money in his hand. Even her confidence was subdued. She feared yet to put too high a price upon her services. "I want three marks," she said sullenly but doubtfully, as though she was ready, if necessary, to drop the price of saving them from death to two marks fifty pfennigs.

"Don't give her anything," Kapper cried.

"Here, take it all," Chant said with disgust and threw his change upon the table. It could not have amounted to more than five marks, but the thin hand which immediately covered the prize and hastily brushed the coins into a skirt pocket seemed the reflection of a movement from Kapper himself.

Kapper stamped a foot upon the floor. "Now go, go," he screamed at her. He shook a finger at an uncurtained window that afforded a glimpse of a small yard, a little larger than a dog kennel, a row of dusty green plants and a parched bird bath, cracked across, like a patch of sun-baked

sand. "It will be daylight while you are still talking here." And indeed a silvery tone was already lightening the common grey.

Still with a maddening and obstinate slowness the woman took up the tray of meat and left the room. They heard her footsteps in the passage, the opening and the closing of a door, but when silence sifted back, they did not relax their attention. Neither man spoke, so intent were they in listening for any sound, in particular for a sound which might indicate discovery and the need of instant flight. Only once did Chant break the stillness with a question, whispered under the weight of apprehension. "Can you trust her?"

"She is my wife," Kapper whispered back, giving a brief glimpse of an amazing paradox, a complete belief in the inviolability of another person's oath.

Chant in imagination followed the woman step by step down the street, watched her feet with the solicitude that a mother might show to the first perilous unsupported movements of her child. The little dints and cracks in the pavement widened in his vision to chasms that sought with a conscious cunning to entrap Bertha

Kapper's feet. The few yards of her journey extended themselves into infinite space, a road that stretched from star to star, yet a road that must be walked before its solitude could be broken by the first brittle movements of the dawn, the click of opening doors, of milkmen's whips, of fastenings undone, of a policeman's holster creaking to his stride. Surely she must have returned by now, he thought, and caught a vision that set his nerves jumping with its plausibility of the woman interrupted in the very act of dropping the meat by a hand on her shoulder. Or perhaps after so carefully covering the signs of murder she would rise to meet a pair of sardonic eyes watching her from under the waning light of the street lamp. We should have gone ourselves, he thought. It would have been less frightening than waiting here. What can have become of her? and at that moment both men started at the click-clack of the reopening and closing door.

Kapper's voice soared in the alarm he had been strangling now for many seconds. "Well?" he cried. His wife's face appeared in the doorway. "What do you mean—well?" she in-

quired, laying an empty tray upon the table.
"I did what you told me to do."

"You found the right spot?" Kapper asked with a doubt of her sense that was devastating in its magnitude.

"I did what you told me," the woman repeated.

"And no one saw you, there was no one in the street?"

"There was no one in the street. How could I tell whether anyone saw me? Someone may have been looking out of a window."

"But didn't you look at the windows?"

"I did what you told me to do," the woman said, evading the question.

"It must be all right," Kapper said in painful dubiety. "It is unlikely that anyone would be awake." Both men straightened themselves with the suddenness of uncoiled springs. Someone was laughing a little above their heads, and so loud and clear was the sound that it might have been in the room itself.

"For God's sake what's that?" Chant asked, feeling all control tearing past his ears and leaving in his clutching fingers no more than worn shreds of self-possession.

"That is only Adolph," Kapper said, letting himself fall into a chair with a murmur of relief. "He sleeps in the next house."

"But that laughter," Chant protested in a voice perilously near to breaking. "Was he laughing at us?"

"Oh, no, no," the Jew said. "He wakes often in the night and thinks of something funny. He is a very happy man. But his jokes are bad." Kapper grimaced as though at the memory of moments of infinite boredom.

"When will it be safe for me to leave?" Chant asked. He remained standing, for any relaxation of vigilance, he thought, would be a temptation to Providence.

"But why should you leave, Herr Chant?" Danger past the Jew was again all friendliness. His arms embraced hospitably the small squat room. "You must sleep here, Herr Chant. That sofa is long enough for you."

Chant eyed with distaste a brown velvet couch through which the ticking protruded like the remaining quills of a bald porcupine.

"No," he said, "I will go back to my hotel. Perhaps you will explain the way."

"But we part friends?" the Jew implored,

rising from his chair and approaching with outspread, tentative hands.

"Yes, yes," Chant said wearily, longing to be gone from this room and its insidious grime.

"And you see now, Herr Chant," the Jew continued, still with hands outspread and palms upturned as though he bore his argument upon a platter, like the Baptist's head, "that my way is right. We do not want bloodshed. That was your way, Herr Chant, not mine."

The conviction with which he made his impertinent claim astounded Chant, afforded just that silence which the Jew needed in order to assume consent and to continue the gentle insistence of his argument. The inevitable phrase occurred, the chorus of Joseph Kapper's eternal ballad. "I am a poet, Herr Chant." He held up one hand as though he would mesmerise Chant with the sight of soiled finger nails, while with the other he pulled open a drawer in the kitchen table. "Your way, Herr Chant," and his twisted mouth seemed to call bitter attention to a young face dead, a body twisting with upturned rump upon the Moselle, and a pile of raw liver flung on a dirty street. Ordure. But my way was not ordure, Chant thought, his

memory catching at a brief belief in barricades and shots fired openly in a good cause. "My way, Herr Chant," a poster billowed in his face like a banner, and it was some moments before he could catch more than unrelated glimpses of what slowly formed itself into a vile caricature of Anne-Marie Demassener. That dark, vivid woman had stood, it seemed, long enough in the doorway of Sebastian Lintz's shop to enable Peter Torner to distort and yet to keep the likeness. An Anne-Marie Demassener picked from a French gutter offered her body, and with it black stockings and pink ribboned corsets, to a French officer.

"This is the best that Peter Torner has yet done. He has, you see, caught the likeness." Joseph Kapper was encouraged by Chant's silence. He had expected opposition.

"Ridicule. That is what will kill the man. How people will laugh at this picture. The hand, they will say, is the hand of Peter, but the idea, ah the idea——"

"People," Chant spoke slowly. "What do you mean by people? Do you mean you will show this—this——"

"In the beer houses. It has already been

distributed. A copy to every table."

"This dirty rag." Chant seized the poster in his hands and tore it across and across. If the pieces had not slipped from his fingers he would have continued so to tear until dawn, for the picture hung like a screen before that other image seen deeply and obscurely in a mirror. "Oh you swine, you swine," he put his fingers to his eyes which were wet with tears.

The Jew danced on the tips of his toes in a reflection of the other's rage. There was even a reflection of the pain in the glance which followed the scraps of paper to the floor. So might a poor man watch the food that would have saved him from a week's hunger thrown to birds.

"Tear, tear," he said. "There are a thousand copies."

Chant said between his fingers, "Is this where my money is going?" and when the Jew fell silent at the memory of the all-important promised pounds, he added, with hands still shutting out the shame of his tears, "I tell you you shan't have a penny of it."

"But why—I do not understand." Only the mention of the money could have so quickly

quenched Joseph Kapper's anger, money that meant to him new editions of his poems, an increasing hum of talk in the beer houses of Trier, a revival of his dying fame. Perhaps somewhere too at the back of these thoughts lay another—a genuine desire for a different Trier. "This woman," he reasoned with a forced amiability, "is nothing to us."

"You are a liar, a liar, I tell you," and with unreasoning anger, "she is not a woman to you." Hateful the suggestion that the Anne-Marie Demassener of that mysterious welcome in the night was a woman in the eyes of the German Jew, a woman to be examined by those dark, desecrating eyes.

And Kapper still charitable, still refusing to be angered again by a youth's hysteria, continued to reason with indomitable amiability, "For, after all, what is she but a loose French-woman?"

But I do not hear what he is saying, Chant protested to himself, stumbling to the door with his eyes half closed, as though the other's words had built a visible form of contamination in the room. Yet in spite of his own will to be deaf he admitted some knowledge of the other's

question in the exclamation which he tossed despairingly back, "I've finished with the whole lot of you," before he slammed the door and faced with open eyes a grey and candid light and the first listless motions of a world awakening to the dawn.

CHAPTER V

It was with a sense of desperate embarrassment that Chant saw through the door held open by the manservant the turned back of Demassener's wife. The door closed behind him, and still he saw no face that might give him a clue to his attitude. The night before they had been mouth to mouth, now between them lay a long strip of carpet, dangled a crystal chandelier, stood the supercilious backs of chairs, and washed the morning sunlight. How in these surroundings, and under a burden of shame, could he take up their relationship where it had been left, in a dark garden, under a white shower? Yet seeing her standing there before the fire, the face invisible, but the dark, close-cut hair and the black dress reminding him of his first sight of her in the doorway of Sebastian Lintz's shop, he found it impossible to drop the new relationship altogether from his thoughts, even though he no longer under-

stood the impulse on her side that had completed it.

"I'm leaving Trier," he said slowly, using no name in addressing her, for to speak of her as Frau Demassener was a desecration of the image he cherished, and he had not the courage to call her Anne-Marie. He had expected her to turn, to give him some clue to what she expected of him, but she remained motionless, one foot a little raised for the fire to warm it. He found it more and more difficult to believe that once he had held her in his arms. All the events of the night, from the moment when Demassener rose to greet him in the overcrowded room to the moment when he slammed Kapper's door behind him, had become unreal, but with a varying tone in unreality. For he longed without hope that the moment in the garden should have a significance outside his own dreams, while he longed with equal despair that what followed were an illusion. So incredible did the latter seem that he found it easily forgotten for moments at a time, only to be remembered afterwards with a more painful sense of the irreparable. If I had not flung that stone—if I had taken a different turning—if I had not

gone back into the garden. Even with Anne-Marie Demassener before him he breathed that wish, for so unreal a satisfaction could not atone for however incredible a death.

"I'm going back to England," he tried again. "I thought I would come to say good-bye." She was turning now and he watched her questioningly across the staid backs of chairs. If her expression contained the least hint of remembrance, he knew that he could never leave Trier without her.

But her face held nothing but a polite questioning. There was not the smallest suggestion that she was on her defence, that she was repressing any thought, when she asked him why he was leaving. "I think you told us last night," she said, "that you meant to stay some weeks?" She did what he would have found impossible, spoke the words "last night" without a tremor. For him they contained passion, fear and death, for her apparently no more than a dinner, a guest, the putting out of lights and bed. As though helping a shy youth to converse, she said, "Your hotel? Is it uncomfortable? Perhaps we could help you." At the word "we" her eyes strayed towards a door

on the left of the room. The contrast of Kapper's kitchen came to Chant's mind, and with it Torner's caricature of the woman before him and Kapper's last words.

"Why are you blushing?" Anne-Marie Demassener asked with cruelty. "Is your hotel as bad as that? Really I must let Captain Kraft know. We don't trouble my husband about such things. He has enough to do." She watched him closely and then smiled as though suddenly enlightened. "Oh, of course," she said, "I remember—your curious friends. You have quarrelled already, or—no," she put out her hands in mock appeal, "you cannot think that I would—what is your English word—sneak." Then, as if she felt that was going a little too far in intimacy with a comparative stranger, she added with pride, "Your activities are really nothing to do with me. If they ever became of the slightest danger to my husband, the police would be at once aware of them."

"It's not that," Chant said with humility. "I'm done with them."

"So soon. You make me really curious. Won't you tell me?"

"You must know by now. I wonder that you consented to see me." He raised his eyes from the floor to her own, which were amused and puzzled.

"I know? All this mystery—you'd think it concerned me. And of course," Anne-Marie Demassener began to laugh on a low, excited note, "it does concern me. I understand now. You are talking about the latest caricature. Why, you know, it's the first in which they have honoured me with a likeness."

"It's vile," Oliver Chant whispered, unable to trust his voice.

"You are a really charming child. If you only understood how entertaining I find their posters. That touch about the French officer——"

"Just because you had a French father——"

"Oh yes—a father—of course." She smiled at Chant in a way that he did not understand, as though she were putting his faults on this side, his virtues on the other, and yet not exactly his faults or exactly his virtues.

"They shan't have a penny of my money."

"Were you really giving them money? What interest did you have in this little state?"

Do you dislike my husband?"

"I begin to think," Chant said, lifting his eyes and speaking with a grudging passion, angry because the subject of his praise possessed what he desired, "that your husband is the greatest man that I've ever known."

"Great? He is great, isn't he, in many ways. The way he loves this town. As for man," she shrugged her shoulders and added in a voice that seemed to be compounded of contempt and a kind of bitter, defensive love, "I'm the best judge of that."

Something restless and unsatisfied in her manner gave Chant courage. "Why does he let you be insulted like this? He could trace these pictures if he wished."

"Ah, but they do no harm, you see, to Trier," Anne-Marie Demassener murmured, bending her face a little way towards the fire, till the gold shadow swept it. "Have you never heard of safety valves? And what do I care? The pictures amuse me, give me a little excitement in this dull place." A scarlet shoe touched a glowing coal and pushed it into the heart of the fire. There was a faint smell of singed leather.

"Well, I am going home," said Oliver Chant.

"I am a little sorry," she said with a conciseness that left no room for any encouragement or hope. "I thought that you might be here for my birthday. My husband makes it a day of holiday in Trier. I believe he must even supply the decorations. I cannot think that the townspeople would drape their houses otherwise. I am not popular."

"It must be difficult."

"It's dismal, I assure you. But he insists. It's his idea of doing me honour. But you see I don't want to be honoured."

It was as though they could not be alone together for long without their talk converging towards a tract of intimacy that lay somewhere between them. Once again she tried to step back from the perilous frontier with a laugh of distaste, but Chant was not so easily daunted.

"I have been honoured," he said. "To have met you——"

"You are lovable," she laughed at him, but this time his seriousness brushed flippancy aside and plunged on, awkwardly, but with

a desperate persistence.

"Last night," he began and would not have been deterred by her incurious gaze had not the door of the room opened, and the servant entered. Chant paused and held his tongue to the tip of the words that were to follow, obstinately refusing to be swayed from his purpose by an interruption, ready to continue speaking the moment the intruder was gone. Three-quarters of his mind were concentrated on his speech, and only one quarter was available for taking in what the servant was saying—that a man was waiting outside who refused to speak to anyone but Herr Demassener.

"But cannot you find out his business? If it is a police matter he must see Captain Kraft. Herr Demassener is busy and cannot be disturbed."

The man, it appeared, had been told that very thing. He had said that he would say nothing to Captain Kraft. He seemed very frightened.

"Well, I can do nothing for him," Anne-Marie Demassener announced with a careless decision that turned to anger as the door of the room opened and disclosed on the threshold a

little elderly man with grey whiskers and a bald head, wrapped in a double-breasted blue serge coat a size too large for him. His hands were knotted round a cap of a vaguely nautical shape.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.
"Who are you?"

The old man took her questions very literally and began to explain that he was the owner of the barge *Rhine Maiden*, from Coblenz in ballast. He had to see Herr Demassener. It was very important.

"You have no business here," Anne-Marie Demassener interrupted him with asperity. "You cannot see the Dictator. If it is a police matter Captain Kraft will deal with it."

"But I want justice," the old man explained gently, raising a pair of eyes as liquid as a deer's. "Captain Kraft is an abrupt man. He will send me to prison. Are you Frau Demassener? You will ask——"

"Fetch Captain Kraft," she said to the servant impatiently, but before he had time to leave the room, something in the weary droop of the old man's shoulders must have caught her imagination, something in his trembling

way of retrieving the cap which had fallen to the floor. "Wait," she said, and to the barge captain, "You can choose between telling me and Captain Kraft. Herr Demassener cannot see you——"

"But, lady," the old man said hastily, his voice shaking, "of course I will tell you, and then you will tell Herr Demassener."

"You must not be too sure of that," she said. "My husband cannot be troubled by small complaints."

"But, lady, this is not a complaint at all. Only I am afraid to tell the police." He paused, moistening his lips, until the servant had left the room. Chant waited with impatience, his mouth still formed round that phrase "last night" which was to be the introduction to he knew not what expression of his sense of ecstasy. It was his own phrase that he heard the old man speaking, as though the extremity of his thought had been sufficient to waken that low, gentle echo. "It was last night, lady." Yes, Oliver Chant murmured to himself, it was last night. Stand there cool, forgetful. I remember. I shall always remember, he almost said aloud, and as his

thought had found its echo, he would not have been surprised if the intensity of his vision too had caused a white fall of petals in the room.

"But, Frau Demassener, you would never believe that I killed the policeman. He was a young man, Frau Demassener, and he must have floated down the stream."

That was the wrong echo, the "last night" which he had desired to forget. Chant straightened himself, as he would have straightened in the dock to alleviate the shame of the occasion by some show of personal pride. He no longer thought of Anne-Marie Demassener, not even to feel surprise at the ease with which she vacated his mind, with no lingering unrest, that a ghost might be expected to leave in an exorcised house.

"What policeman? I don't understand." The question held no sense of the questioner. It was insignificant, trivial, to be brushed aside in an anxious waiting for the answer.

"It was like this, lady. The old woman was in her bunk and I and Fritz—that's my dog—were looking over the side. I was taking a last pipe before my son began his watch."

"Yes, but where did all this happen?"

Another trivial question, Chant thought, hating the speaker, though he gave her in his mind no personality, no face, no eyes, no tone of voice.

"The *Rhine-Maiden*, lady. Surely I told you. In ballast for Coblenz. We were tied up below the New Bridge, and there's no need really for a watch, now that Herr Demassener keeps everything so quiet. It's a matter of habit, though," the old man added apologetically, raising lucid blue eyes towards the more tortuous intermingled colours of Anne-Marie Demassener's.

"Go on," Chant said in furious expectation.

"Well, as I was saying, we were looking out over the river when Fritz began to get restless. He leapt up on the side and barked."

"I thought," said Anne-Marie Demassener with a tired amusement, "that Fritz was your son."

"No, lady, my dog. My son was to have the next watch."

"Anyway your story is a very long one. I'm sure we should do better to call Captain Kraft."

The old man held out his cap like a beggar

seeking alms. "Oh no, lady, I promise you I will be short."

"Go on, go on," Chant said again with an impatience that focussed on his face the slightly bored curiosity of the Dictator's wife.

"Yes sir. I'm only anxious to oblige. My dog, Fritz, jumped into the water, and soon I could see he was dragging a body. It had been floating down the river. A policeman it was. I fetched the body on board. He had been shot, lady, not drowned."

The facts were out now, and Chant could feel relief that the worst, surely the worst, was over. His shoulders relaxed, and in allowing himself a short sigh from between teeth no longer locked he became aware again of Anne-Marie Demassener and of her curious, amused gaze.

"I suppose," said Anne-Marie Demassener, "that this is the sort of thing that my husband would consider important." The death of a policeman, she seemed to indicate, had no interest for her, but might appeal to a man's grosser sensibilities. She pondered, still with her eyes on Chant. "And of course you were afraid to go straight to the police." She added

as if to herself, "When one considers the stupidity of that Captain Kraft, one has to admit that you were wise. Yet there must be people," she mused further, "who would be very glad if Captain Kraft took up the case. They would be glad if it was you who were arrested. Where is the body now?"

"It is still on my barge, lady."

"You know," she said, addressing Chant directly and apparently letting the barge-keeper slip entirely from her consciousness, "I have never seen the body of a murdered person. Do they bear any marks of it in their expression? I am curious, because it has often seemed to me that I might end in that way." She spoke the words slowly and distinctly, as though she were taking careful aim and flinging each like a pebble against that quivering nerve in Chant which remembered the kneeling figure and the dribble of blood from the corner of the lips. "Of course I must tell my husband. But first it might be of interest to see the body. Would you come with me?" she challenged the white, strained face of Oliver Chant.

"I would go anywhere with you," he said.

"Even there?"

"Even there."

"Well, of course, I was only joking," she said with grudging admiration. "Besides you are leaving Trier today. I wouldn't delay you. Would you really let me delay you?" she added in a puzzled tone.

"You have only to ask."

Anne-Marie Demassener seemed suddenly to become aware of the presence of the old man. She looked at him as though she did not remember seeing him before. Then she nodded. "You can go now," she said. "I will tell my husband. You had better remain in the building until he wishes to see you. They will give you a glass of beer in the kitchen."

The old man hesitated in the doorway. "You will tell him, lady, that I am quite innocent? He will not put me in prison?"

"My husband," Anne-Marie Demassener said coldly, "is not Captain Kraft."

When they were alone Chant said, "You are wrong. I'm not responsible."

"But you are leaving Trier," she said. "That's a curious coincidence, isn't it? Was it necessary to make me the excuse?"

Chant approached her and ignored the ques-

tion. "Last night?" he said. "What did that mean?"

"It meant murder apparently," Anne-Marie Demassener said with some amusement. "I think I must go to my husband now, and you—" she laughed, "why you had better catch a train to Luxemburg."

"I'm not going," Chant said. "I'm not going," he repeated with an obstinate, impotent rage that bruised itself in vain against the superficially amused attitude of Anne-Marie Demassener. If I cannot make her care, he cried to himself, at least I will anger her. He did not know in that moment whether he loved or hated. He knew that to succeed in giving her pain would be a greater pleasure than he had ever experienced, but whether he lied when he flung at her the words like debased coinage, "I love you," he could not himself have said.

She had moved towards the door as though she would dismiss him, but at his cry she came slowly back into the centre of the room with an expression between curiosity and repulsion. "Mr. Chant," she said, "have you been drinking?"

"Mr. Chant, Mr. Chant," he laughed hysterically, "was I Mr. Chant in the garden last night?"

"You were nothing in the garden last night," she said fiercely. "Nothing," she repeated, as though she had caught some of his passion for inflicting pain. "Poor boy," swayed by an unreasoning and inexplicable anger she was even ready to descend to vulgarity, "have you never kissed a woman before?"

"I've never loved anyone before like this," he said, and "this" was bitterness, anger, a lust for pain, which made him strike blindly in the dark, not caring whether his words were unforgivable. "I know you don't love your husband."

The silence that followed frightened him. It threw emphasis on what he had said and the nature of his offence. It was a silence that had somehow to be broken, and to break it he was willing to put forgiveness still further out of his reach. At least, he thought, she will hardly forget me. Aloud he said, "Your husband can't love you to allow these pictures—." He did not finish his sentence. He had wished to injure her but he had never desired a vengeance

so complete. He saw her pride run down like a flag. Her face had always been white. Now her skin seemed so dry that it might have been cracked like foil. She put her fingers up to her mouth as though she would pull it back into some shape of courage. "What do you know about us?" she whispered. "Why don't you go?"

The surrender was not complete. That could never be expected of Anne-Marie Demassener. Her spirit was like a garrison, ravaged, defeated, but determined to fight on. But the cause of the defeat was not clear to Oliver Chant. His words, he knew, were unforgivable. He could not see that they were devastating. He was frightened by their effect.

"I didn't mean," he said and stood abashed at the inadequacy of any apology.

"Aren't you going?" Anne-Marie Demassener whispered, as though she feared her voice might betray her, though what save anger or unhappiness it could betray Chant did not understand. That it might be hiding a depth of unhappiness of which he was unaware robbed him of any further desire for pain.

"I'm sorry," he said. "But I love you,"

he added less in excuse than in explanation. For love, he supposed now, must mean this blind fighting in the dark, this bruising incomprehension of another's mind. "Oh," he cried, "won't you explain?" and the foolishness of the phrase went echoing through his brain, returning always the same word, "explain, explain, explain."

"I don't know what you mean," her voice had returned, sharpened by the contact with his own. "Is this a proposal of—it can't be marriage," she said with a kind of feline, self-conscious amusement, "for I am already married. This, I suppose, is what novelists used to call an infamous suggestion. Mr. Chant, of—of South-West London—offering the post of mistress to the wife of the Dictator of Trier. Doesn't it strike you as amusing—as," she added fiercely, "impertinent? Surely it would be a good subject for your friend the cartoonist."

It was her amusement and not her indignation that hurt Oliver Chant. As in a pantomime palace is suddenly transformed to kitchen, fairies to flying crockery, so his declaration of love became the burlesque of a clown.

"Do you suggest," she went on, "that I catch the train with you to Luxemburg? Perhaps you have already booked a room at an hotel? There are plenty of hotels at Luxemburg that receive unmarried couples. Shall I send for a servant and tell him that I am leaving the palace?"

But Anne-Marie Demassener had overstated herself. She had built up again the opposition which had crumbled at the first touch of her anger. Oliver Chant remembered that he had shown more mercy to her defeated. "You may have to leave the palace yet," he said.

"Mr. Chant of London," she said, "is threatening me."

"Has it occurred to you that your husband may not always be the Dictator?" he retorted angrily and wished the moment after that he could take back less his words than their intonation. He had not wished to rail at her, to turn the whispered speech and the sudden caress in the garden to a windy space of anger and high voices. It was that and not the threat which shamed him and made him wish to atone.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to

say that. I came here to say good-bye. I'll still go if it would please you."

"And spare my husband?" she said with renewed mockery. She stood as erect as he had seen her first in Sebastian Lintz's shop. He had thought then that she seemed ready for a sword thrust rather than a word. Now, between lids which half-dropped in sudden weariness, her eyes showed that she had become only too accustomed to words. She was ready to go on, as long as he chose to stay, parry and thrust, parry and thrust, in this mock medium, holding her own, guarding from his understanding a secret of which she had once that morning given him a baffling glimpse. Words, words, words, he thought, hate giving way before a renewal of a love that was in part pity and a boundless admiration; it was shameful that the world and he should so treat her. He at least would show that she deserved deeds, and he could have hated Demassener at that moment because he too must have plied her with endless words.

"I'll stay then," he said. "I won't tire you with any more talk. I'd rather fight for you," he added at the door in a wave of romanticism.

"I shall never forget last night," but as he went through the door and lost the sight of her, it was the other vision of "last night" that he remembered.

PART II

CHAPTER VI

OLIVER CHANT then paid his highest tribute to Anne-Marie Demassener or rather to his own beautiful and confusing image of her. It did not occur to him that she might tell her husband of his friendship for Demassener's enemies and of the reason he had expressed for staying in Trier. His tribute was justified, though her reason for keeping Chant's purpose secret, he was later to discover, was not the one he then imagined—a simple integrity of character. The fact that he never doubted her, from the moment when he left the palace, made him determined on one thing. The struggle must be an honourable one.

It was to announce this to Joseph Kapper that he went straight from the palace to Lintz's shop. Without waiting for the bell to be answered, he passed behind the counter and opened the door of the inner room. He found about a dozen men on their feet facing the door,

and at least six revolvers covering him. He saw no sign of Kapper, Torner or Lintz, and wondered for a moment, which was curiously fatalistic, whether he would be shot before he could explain himself.

Then a voice said, "All right. Put them away," and Kapper came forward from where he had been hidden by the bodies of his supporters.

"I am glad to see you, Herr Chant," he said. "I thought you had left us." He made a sign with his fingers, and two men leant casually against the inner door.

"No, I've come back," Chant said.

"And that of course is satisfactory," Kapper murmured, as though intent on a more important business than this polite interchange. He raised his dark eyes to Chant's face and said with gloomy dignity, "I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"If I'm not welcome," Chant said with anger and turned back towards the door.

The two men did not stir to let him pass. They were large and heavy and seemed to feel a great desire for sleep. Their hands were in their pockets.

Chant faced the Jew again. Anne-Marie's eyes, he thought, in their mingled colours were like circling, tortuous corridors whose direction none could guess. The Jew's were a passage leading straight to a sanctuary which was too dark to be comprehended. "What do you want to ask me?" he said.

"Why did you visit the palace this morning?"

"I went," Chant said, "to say good-bye. I had meant to leave Trier."

"What made you change your mind?"

"A private reason. It has nothing to do with you."

"Perhaps. But hasn't it occurred to you, Herr Chant, that your conduct is very like that of a spy?"

Chant smiled, "I never thought of that," he said.

Joseph Kapper shook his head at him, as he might at a stupid child. "This is not a game, Herr Chant. We started something last night that must go on."

"About that," Chant said, "I have something to tell you. The body has been found." He saw the Jew's fingers close and the mouth entrap a breath which might have contained a

tremor. "He was seen in the water by a barge keeper below the New Bridge."

"It had floated more than a mile then," the Jew said in a voice of gratitude, whether to Chant for his news, or to Jarveh for protecting a representative of his chosen was doubtful. Yet suspicion spoiled his pleasure. "How did you learn that?" he asked.

"I was with Frau Demassener when the news was brought."

"If I thought," Kapper said, "that you were a spy——" The sense of a purpose had left him, and the shift of his feet disclosed a pitiful indecision. His eyes seemed to beg Chant for a confession or a justification.

"What a fool you would be," Chant finished his sentence for him. "If I had told about the murder, why should I have returned to you here? The police would have come."

"We cannot take risks," Kapper said, with an obstinacy that sprang from indecision. He glanced contemptuously at the other men in the room. It was clear that he expected no intellectual help from them. Then his eyes returned to Chant's with a mute appeal for conviction, conviction of any kind, whether of safety or

betrayal. "I suppose," he said grudgingly, "that we must trust you. It would be no good to shoot you. We can do nothing without your money," he added frankly. "Fritz, Karl," he motioned the two men away from the door. They sank against a wall and apparently fell asleep.

"And what do you intend to do with it?" Chant asked.

A tall man spoke from the shadows in the background: "Shoot Demassener." He thrust a head forward into a ray of sunlight which shone on a number of spots and a grey syphilitic scar.

"You don't need money for murder," Chant said with contempt.

"It must be followed up," the man rejoined. "All that is needed," he explained, his face fallen back into shadow, but two hands bathing themselves in the golden stream, "is to choose a really certain time. That needs thought," he added, his hands withdrawing themselves, the big body sinking backwards, as though he could not follow his idea into the more recondite intellectual realms. His whole attitude of relaxation seemed to say: "Now, you wordy ones,

choose the time. When you want action, come to me."

"I will not give a penny for murder," Chant said.

For a moment there was silence. No one protested. Everyone seemed to admit Chant's right to spend his money as he wished. Like patient shop assistants they had produced an article. It was rejected. Very well. Another one must be produced. Even the man in the shadow did not protest, though his silence perhaps contained a hint of contempt, the conviction that the merit of his own article would have to be conceded eventually.

"And another thing," Chant said, "I will finance no more propaganda against Demassener's wife."

Kapper shrugged his shoulders. The Englishman's ideas, he conveyed, were beyond him. "Peter Torner has just caught the likeness," he allowed himself to murmur. "It is a pity."

"Not a penny," Chant repeated.

"Perhaps," the Jew said, with scornful pride,

"Herr Chant condemns also my poems."

"I know nothing about your poems," Chant

said abruptly, "I am not here to be a patron of the arts. But I will not pay for the printing of scurrilous rhymes."

In the silence that followed somebody laughed, as somebody will always laugh at the fall of anything great, even if it is only the fall of a great conceit. That was in a corner of the room, but in the centre Chant was enabled to see the whole process of the fall. It was as though a light went out in the Jew's eyes and then was lit again in a further recess, whence it was carried by an inquisitional hand back and back till it might have shone in the sanctuary itself had not Kapper spoken. That was what they had all been waiting for: "I, Kapper, the poet," to speak, and Chant was amazed at the inadequacy of his reply. All he said was "Wait. You will need those rhymes."

"They are useless," Chant said.

Kapper stared round him painfully, as if he sought less a voice to support him than some look, however fragmentary, of respect to reinforce his own confidence, to quench that light which even now was illuminating for him his own inner mind. But he saw nothing but dull, uninterested, uncomprehending eyes of men

waiting for orders. Useless for anyone to expect from them support for a conviction. They would only obey.

Without raising his voice or making any theatrical gesture of the hands, scarcely giving any emphasis to his declaration of a defensive faith, he said: "I do not want your money for my work. I shall go on writing. Demassener has not stopped me," he added, with the faintest touch of defiance.

"I do not care whether you write or not," Chant said. "No money of mine is going to be used for printing filthy verses."

The nerve at the corner of Kapper's mouth began to twitch. He could not have helped remembering the docility with which Chant had at first accepted his directions. He may have fixed the moment of the change, the moment when Anne-Marie Demassener had asked for brandy and he had refused it her. The night before he had seen Chant take Torner's picture and tear it in pieces, but now the invisible fall of flakes which his eyes followed in a dark pain to the floor were the scraps of his own poems. He had dreamed of inundating Trier with his verses, of raising his own name as high as Demassener's on

a foundation of paper. He was not a man built for barricades.

"All right," he said. "Go your own way. You will be beaten. If you had given me time (time, his mind may have run on at a tangent from his words, for new editions, for new pamphlets, for new satires, for a growing fame), I would have brought the people to your side. You cannot win while they respect Demassener." He allowed himself the only gesture of his defeat. "When you have been beaten," he said, "remember that it was I, Kapper——" The time-worn phrase came readily to Joseph Kapper's lips, but before it could be completed the memory of a solitary laugh, of Chant's careless dismissal of his "scurrilous rhymes," of that circle of uninterested faces, checked him, lit again the lamp of questioning doubt which was borne back, this time by a panic hand, to the dark core of his eyes.

"Perhaps," he continued almost humbly, "Herr Chant will explain to us what he is prepared to do." They grouped themselves round the table which hid, Chant knew, the trap-door leading to the dead abandoned arsenal, the strange machine that had so frightened him by

the hid purposefulness of its jutting angles. The man with the scarred face did not join them, but remained hovering above in his shadow like some Dutch angel floating heavily in his pictured and protective cloud.

"How many men can we rely on?" Chant asked, and a little wizened man at his elbow who sat awkwardly on a low chair, his feet cautiously pawing the ground as though they were more accustomed to dangle from an office stool, assured him that there were about a thousand.

"Herr Chant," Kapper said softly, "means more than you think. He means how many men are there who can be relied on to die. These men will distribute pamphlets, stick up posters, stand on one side. That is all."

"The villages?" Chant asked. "Do we get support from them?"

"They are negligible," Kapper said. "If we seize Trier, no one will interfere with us and no one will help us."

"And how many men can Demassener rely on? He has the police?"

"It is not the number," a man said. "It is the arms."

"We must get arms," Chant said. "Where does Demassener find them?"

"He got them from us," another man said angrily. "They are all ours."

"That was two years ago," Chant pointed out. "He must have replenished his stock since then."

A man in a blue, double-breasted coat said: "From Coblenz. He brings them across the border."

"Does he buy from the German Government, then?"

"Oh, no," the man said. He was the man who had laughed at Kapper's downfall. He had a wide, clean-shaven, sunburnt face with humorous eyes. He was almost the only man there who seemed to carry in him any living spark of intelligence. He added: "You can always find a private trader near a frontier."

"And Demassener brings the arms by rail?"

"Yes, but we have the Moselle." With the motion of one tipping a coin out of his fingers on to the table, he said: "My barge is at your service, Herr Chant."

"We could never pass the Customs," the wizened man said in a shrill voice.

"The Customs officer is a good friend of mine. For a consideration he has often let me bring through for my friends a barrel of Rhine wine."

"Yes, but arms?" Chant said.

"Of course," the barge-keeper explained, "that is different. He is a loyal officer. But if he is paid well and thinks it is ordinary contraband, he will let us through. Contraband, what is it? We are all Germany. It is only the Dictator who makes us pay more for Rhine wine, so that the Moselle trade prospers and he can tax the growers more."

"You know Coblenz well?" Chant asked, and when the man nodded, he said: "Can you get in touch with someone willing to sell us arms?"

"I think so, but it all depends on how much you are willing to pay, Herr Chant? It is against the law, and one must always pay heavily for breaking the law."

"As heavily as you like," Chant said, with angry recklessness. I am in it now to the end, he thought. I would have gone if you had asked, he added as though to the proud impassive face of Anne-Marie Demassener, his

heart torn between a certain love and an uncertain hate, now we will see who will fight best for you. But surely, he reminded himself with a bitter hopelessness, it is an unfair struggle, for if I win I do not get the prize.

"Tell me," he said, bringing his thoughts back with some difficulty to the docile and expectant faces, "if we pass the Customs safely, where can we land the arms and where can we store them?" He looked at Joseph Kapper. "I don't know where we were last night. I'm still strange to this town. But the waterfront seemed to be deserted, and your home is near."

"No, I will have nothing to do with this," Kapper said. "Your plans are mad. I will not lend you my house."

"It would not do," the barge-keeper interrupted. "To take them as far as St. Mathias would be dangerous. There is always a police boat between the New Bridge and the Roman Bridge. Listen," from a pocket-book he drew a small map and laid it on the table before Chant. It was significant that he ignored Joseph Kapper. The full meaning of his action did not escape the Jew. Wherever the genius of revolution lay, he must have thought with some

bitterness, leadership certainly belonged to the man with money. With no apparent resentment, unless a slight emphasis on his own humility was intended, he rose and crossed to the window. Outside the white walls of the Jesuit Seminary rose from the cobbles of the square. Though grimy and distorting panes the Jew regarded the bronze effigy of the Madonna, who stared towards the sky regardless of the struggling statuary below her. His back turned on them, he could not see the clustering heads, bent shoulders, gesticulating, tangled fingers.

"We must make up our minds," the barge-keeper was saying slowly to Chant, his thumb following the course of the Moselle, "that we cannot bring the cargo past the New Bridge. It is inconvenient, perhaps, but I suggest that we tie up to the bank opposite the city at Pallien." His thumb indicated a village, just above the New Bridge, which seemed to consist of a church and a few houses struggling up a steep hillside to the pine woods below the Kochelsberg.

"But then?" Chant asked.

"My home is there," the man explained. "The arms can be stored in my cellar." As a white puff of cloud on which the sun shines

changes when the sun has gone to a heavy bladder of rain and wind, so his face, deserted by his broad, good-humoured smile, became brooding and full of a foretaste of storm. "My wife and children are there," he added, with an apparent inconsequence which seemed to reflect domestic thoughts, of flames in a deep fireplace, of hams turning and twisting in the wood-smoke, and a tired body, freed at last from the wind and rain along the river, sinking in a comfortable chair.

"The risk?" Chant said. "Is there no one without a wife and family who would store the arms?" His protest was half-hearted, for the man's sacrifice seemed in part to hallow the cause that had once been selfless, but had become so confusing a mixture of his own love and hate.

"They are all good Catholics," the man said quietly. He apparently referred to his family. It was the first time in Trier that Chant had heard a hint of religious antagonism.

"Is Demassener——" he began, and was answered at once by a number of heated contradictions. The wizened man with the shrill voice said that of course Demassener was a Catholic. He had made a special grant towards

the new Catholic elementary schools. But that, another man explained, was only in order that the State might gain control of what was taught. "He is afraid of the priests," a third man said, and was contradicted by a fourth, who said that, on the contrary, the priests were all in Demassener's pockets. "They are afraid of a republic because they are afraid of light," said a man with loose fair hair in a high, unintelligent voice. Chant had noticed already that he spoke always in generalizations. "I have seen him at Mass with my own eyes," the wizened man remarked quickly, pawing the floor with his feet. "Mass," exclaimed the man with the scarred face, who up to now had brooded in silent contempt above their plans and discussions, "Mass," he repeated, with a certain venom, his eyes, turning to the figure at the window, "I have seen Jews at Mass." "It is true what he says," the fair-haired man said, "I have been to Mass, but I am an atheist." "He has forbidden any Easter gatherings," another man said.

From the turmoil of discussion two men to Chant's eyes stood apart. The Jew, dignified by his quietude, still stared through the window

at the mother of his eternal enemy; the barge-keeper sat with his thumb planted firmly on a small spot in Pallien. Only when the discussion had subsided, except for an occasional excited word from the wizened man, he repeated his original assertion—"They are all good Catholics"—as though he held some standard that had nothing to do with elementary schools or priests or even attendance at Mass.

"If we accept your offer," Chant said, "we must not leave the arms too long in your cellar."

"Nor should they be distributed till the last moment," the barge-keeper added, still with his thumb pressed to the map as though he were defending his privilege of bearing the chief danger. "There would always be some foolish fellow who would get drunk and use his weapon in a brawl. Then the police would search and find the rest."

"But then?" Chant asked. "What date to fix for the attempt?" He met silence. The faces before him recoiled. His direct question had brought into each man's view the immanence and immensity of death. They had planned and plotted for two years while Kapper preserved for them their self-respect by some kind of

action, if it was no more than that of a hand holding a pen. Now in a space of minutes a foreigner had taken revolt out of a vague future and held it under their noses. To a few of them there was no doubt that it stank.

"I do not know Trier," Chant said. "I am a stranger. Can none of you help me?" He appealed to all, but his eyes made a more direct request of the man in the blue coat. Even he was silent with thumb pressed on Pallien. The river, he seemed to indicate, was his element. He could bring the arms from Coblenz down the Moselle and store them in his home. The rest of the exploit must take place on land in narrow streets.

It was Joseph Kapper who broke the silence. If he had been waiting to reassert his importance, he could not have chosen a better occasion. "I will tell you," he said, "the Frenchwoman's birthday." He returned to the table and pulled the map from under the barge-keeper's thumb. "Look," he said, "you have your arms on the wrong side of the river. Men must come over and fetch them across the New Bridge. That means a stream of people to and fro. The only day when that will not be noticed is the day of

the public holiday. People will be coming and going all day from the villages across the river."

"And what day is that?" Chant asked.

"In six days," the Jew replied, with a smile, whose irony Chant did not understand until he heard the tumult of protest that broke across the table. "Impossible," the wizened man shrilled. "The arms have to be bought. Plans must be made. Nothing is prepared."

"I thought," Chant said, "you had been preparing these two years."

"That is different," said the man with the fair loose hair. "We have been working on the minds of the people. There are no plans for an actual outbreak. This time next year . . ."

Next year. Next year. That became the burden of the ballad chanted on all sides of him, the momentarily popular song that mocked Chant with the unattainability of Anne-Marie Demassener. If he returned to London now, where would he be, what would he be feeling, in another year? Making his way towards the refreshments in Mrs. Meadmore's drawing-room, brushing by the high-raised shoulders of Peter Remnant, would he even remember the anniversary or feel more than an elegiac interest

if the name of Anne-Marie Demassener were casually spilt into the room? Surely, he protested in silent pain, those syllables would always fall like a deep, disturbing note of music across the shuffle of feet, the tinkle of glasses. But the mind in its silence showed that it was aware how the note would be no more regarded than light music from a distant room. "Next year . . . next year . . . next year . . ." the babble of voices clung to that refrain. But I do not wish to forget, Chant silently cried, as a man across whose vision the first mist had passed, might protest against blindness robbing him of light and all that in the desperate moment he considered beautiful. "Next year . . . next year . . . next year . . ."

"Next week," Chant cried, with such fierceness that the other voices were silenced. "Drop out if you like," he said, infuriated by the ironic, superior gaze of Joseph Kapper, "I'll pull it through without you."

Then the man in the blue coat said quietly: "I do not understand the objections." Chant turned to him in relief: "You will help me?" he asked. The man nodded his broad, good-humoured face towards his companions. "We

will all help you," he said. "It was only the suddenness, Herr Chant . . ." he did not finish his sentence, but waited for a contradiction, and so astounded were they all at one of their number supporting the foreigner in his insanity that no one spoke. "There, that is settled," he said. "Herr Chant, I am leaving to-night for Coblenz. When I have found an agent I will telegraph to you. You can join me and do business. I will not do business with another man's money. The next day I will leave Coblenz in the afternoon, so that I may pass the Customs in the dark and the arms may be unloaded at Pallien before dawn. You had better return by rail and see that we have men waiting at Pallien."

"No, I will come with you in the barge," Chant said. "I do not see why you should take the whole risk."

"It will be a dark, cold journey," the man commented, "and a long one against the current. Twelve hours, if we are lucky. And who will see to the arrangements at Pallien if you come with me?"

"You?" Chant appealed, with a certain desperation to Joseph Kapper, and the Jew,

hesitating just long enough to emphasise again his indispensability, agreed. "I will have half a dozen men on the bank," he said. "More would attract the notice of the police. You will have to fix the mooring point exactly. We cannot show lights."

"They will never pass the Customs," the wizened man repeated, with contempt.

CHAPTER VII

THEN the hours began to pass, very heavily and slowly to that refrain: "They will never pass the Customs." It began to seem to Chant a slender thread on which the success of the outbreak depended, the potential dishonesty of a Customs officer. Unlike Sir Robert Walpole, he doubted whether every man had his price. Somewhere within all whom he had met at Trier lay hidden a hard core; even the Jew had the integrity of his pride, which it had been dangerous to touch. Only in himself could Chant find nothing, save the quick changes of desire. He wondered whether this was at last maturity—this uncertain wavering love that seemed to demand pain and tears and selfishness and never laughter.

The slow hours became crystallised into groups, into what clocks and shopkeepers called morning, evening, night. They were terms which meant nothing to Chant; morning to him was the close regarding of a map, the pacing of

the streets, interviews with shallow, frightened men, arguments with Joseph Kapper: "You will never pass the Customs"; evening was the return of longing, the effort to see, through eyes blurred with memories, the small print of the map, to listen to dull voices—"You will never pass the Customs"—through remembered music; and night meant dreams, crude, grotesque, inconsequent, that wronged the perfect image.

When one day had passed, and Weber, the man in the blue coat, had left for Coblenz, Chant was forced to spend more time at the gasthaus, waiting for a telegram. It was a Wednesday, according to calendars, though to Chant it was the day after saying good-bye to Anne-Marie Demassener. Few days were left. In spite of his peculiar spur to action Chant began to sympathise a little with those who had protested at the date. I am an inadequate amateur, he thought. He had never realised the many details to be arranged and he had been forced at once to appeal for help to Joseph Kapper. If rhymes and libels and lampoons and indecent pictures were unnecessary, there was still work for the printing

press in producing by the thousand leaflets of exhortation, warning, encouragement. The piles of paper in the damp cellar rose; Peter Torner, fat, sulky, perspiring, Sebastian Lintz, old, frightened, suspicious, had to be cajoled into sorting the leaflets into generic piles, arranging them into packets of fifties and hundreds, labelling them with letters to correspond with the districts in which they were to be distributed, directly the first shots had been fired. St. Paulin, Zurlauben, Maar, Löwenbrücken, St. Barbara, Heiligkreuz, St. Mathias, in all these districts supporters had to be interviewed, encouraged, their fears quietened. Then they must be apportioned their duties. The old and the incurably nervous were given the task of distributing the leaflets and displaying the posters, and in each district a leader had to be chosen to superintend the distribution of arms, the raising of barricades, the timing of the outbreak. Chant had known none of them for more than a few minutes' conversation and had no means of judging the wisdom of his choice. Always he ran the risk of police spies.

It was useless to expect much help from Joseph Kapper. The Jew put no difficulties in

his way, but he made it clear that he would do no more than obey the other's orders. He was a subordinate now. Every movement of his narrow shoulders, every softly-spoken word, every glance from dark ironic eyes emphasised the fact. Kapper, Lintz, and Torner formed a trinity of unspoken doubt, but Chant was grateful that it was not of treachery.

The plans were formed rapidly but with a terrifying vagueness. Every new point was debated, contradictory views were upheld with personal venom, and when a decision was reached, Chant never felt assured that it was understood in the same sense by all. He was hindered, too, by the faultiness of his German and the constant necessity of depending on Joseph Kapper for an interpretation.

The plan at last accepted was to attempt to isolate the palace and its immediate surroundings, a rectangle of which the sides were the four main streets, the Ost-allee, the Nord-allee, the Sud-strasse and the Brode-strasse. Outside that district the police stations were to be assaulted at a given hour and simultaneously barricades were to be flung up at various points along the sides of the rectangle, where streets

entered the district. Houses along the main streets were to be quietly occupied half an hour before the outbreak, and all the machine-guns available were to be posted in the windows. Otherwise revolvers would be the only arms. No shots were to be fired unless the police fired first. The success of the outbreak depended on surprise, on the neutrality of the police, who might be unwilling to shoot down their fellow-citizens, or on popular support. For the last, Kapper explained, with care, it was useless to hope. "If we could have destroyed their respect for Demassener," he added, not troubling to finish his sentence. His moral was too obvious to need explaining. All knew that the work of Kapper, the poet, had been interrupted by the impetuosity of a youth. Gold had won, the gold that one part of his nature could not help regarding with the reverence of Aaron, even while his pride had learnt to hate it.

Thursday came and went with its slow burden of hours, slow, in spite of all the work to be done because it was a period of darkness unlighted by any sight of Anne-Marie Demassener. As a man suffering from insomnia acts again and again the last game which he played before bed,

taking interminable tricks with an exhausting but inexhaustible hand of trumps, so Chant all through that day was wearied by the sight of a foot caressing a glowing coal, of complex eyes that from a white mask peered out at him with contempt. He scarcely noticed the absence of a telegram from Weber.

Friday entered the small slanting window of the gasthaus, a dimmed sun shining along layers of thin mist, spreading them with golden honey. Chant sat up in bed and counted on his fingers the days which still separated him from Anne-Marie Demassener. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and then a hundred possibilities, any of which must surely contain the sight of her. If he won this gamble, then she must look to him for protection, and if he lost, would she not at least attend the court martial which would sentence him? Yet Chant felt uncertain whether even in that resort her interest would carry her so far. He turned restlessly in his bed, impatient for the passage of the days.

It was only when Friday afternoon gave place to evening that Chant became anxious at Weber's silence. He could read triumph in the subdued deference of Joseph Kapper. Chant, he seemed

to suggest, had failed at the very outset; it was time that he took advice. With a conscious and galling nobility the Jew refrained from comment. Chant remembered his first evening in Trier and how he had stared with consternation through the dark, dripping cellar at the object of which the Jew had said, with pride: "I, Kapper, imagined this." Well, he himself had imagined something, imagined—through the polite, vindictive forms of the young men at Mrs. Meadmore's—a barricade. And now the sole result was silence. There was something lacking, it appeared, in his imagination, some intense quality, perhaps, which the Jew possessed and which gave his dreams reality. What would it matter, Chant thought, at the end of the man's days that the dreams had been ugly? He had made them concrete; he had created.

During the evening at Sebastian Lintz's Kapper at last spoke. "If we do not hear from Weber to-morrow," he said, "it will be too late."

Chant flushed. "I don't agree," he said. "In any case, we must hear."

"That man," Kapper said softly, "I would never have trusted him as you did. He is too

easy going. He will probably be drunk from the moment that he unloads at Coblenz to the moment he leaves again for Trier. These barge-keepers are all the same."

"I don't believe it," Chant said. His nerves were beginning to feel the strain, but less from Weber's silence and the failure of his hopes than from the reiterated image of Anne-Marie Demassener, which never showed the recognition due to any lover in a cause however hopeless.

"You will see," Kapper said. He spoke with venom. "Our good Weber is even now, I expect—what is your English phrase?—half a sea over. He is a stupid fellow."

Chant banged his hand upon the table, seeing—as a background to that eternal haunter of his heart—three pairs of triumphant eyes. "You think him stupid, do you?" he cried, conscious of a break in his voice which robbed even justifiable anger of any trapping of dignity. "That I suppose is because he laughed at you."

In front of him the small dark eyes, which seemed polished to reflect light and never to contain it, receded. Kapper's voice startled him. It was full of a horror that anyone should have

noticed an indignity which he had hoped was a secret to himself. "Do you think I care?" he said. "What does a man like that know of my work?" He laughed tremulously and unconvincingly. "A stupid barge-keeper." But he would have said in other circumstances and with the same attempt at scorn: "A stupid world," and have been as unconvinced. There was nothing higher than the world to which the Jew could appeal, no supernatural tribunal to find his work of value. It was with envy that he looked through the window at the moonlit court in which the Madonna stood.

He turned on Chant in a flare of anger. "Do you think I write nothing but verses for Torner's nudes?" he demanded, and was met by an uninterested shrug which was nothing more than a lesson learnt from a woman. He was accustomed to posturing before mirrors, but not before a glass that gave back another's imperturbable image. "I am a poet," he said, his voice falling away like an unsuccessful tune.

He had at least, Chant admitted, with a certain wonder, retained some dignity in his degradation, if it was no more than gave him power to abstain from the obvious retort—

"whatever I am as a poet, at least I warned you of your own futility." For of his futility Chant was becoming more aware with every stroke of the clock. Peter Torner, however, had not the restraint of his leader.

"You see," Peter Torner said in a shrill voice that came strangely from so mountainous a man, "if you had listened to Joseph. . . . We had been making progress. You have been in Trier less than a week. How could you tell that we were not making progress?" He raised dimpled hands to the bristles of his head and began to whimper like a child. "I wish we had never wanted your money. You have spoilt everything. My pictures were good, Joseph said so. And had I not at last caught the likeness?" Sebastian Lintz nodded his approval, expressing at the same time his reprobation of the Englishman's disastrous impetuosity. "I cannot think," he said, "why Herr Kurtz chose to send you here." His head remained nodding up and down when Chant, with an uncontrollable impatience, rose and left the shop.

Outside was the perpetual moonlight of white walls against which the Madonna cast her shadow, but Chant was in no mood to find

beauty in an unearthly and tender ideal. If he desired tenderness, it was the faulty, brief, flickering tenderness which is the best the world can do; and for ideal he would have been satisfied with the touch of a body. It was not years that mattered to him: the dream of an enduring love might come, he supposed, when the first desire was satisfied, but now the full extent of his ambition was a few minutes, in darkness, without sight, without sound.

They are right, he said to himself, admitting what he would never have conceded to that vindictive tribunal of triumphant eyes; if the message does not come to-morrow, I have failed. Suddenly he could not believe that the message would come; he had grown so accustomed to waiting. And if the message did not come, good-bye for ever to all hope of further contact, even that distant contact of mutual recognition in the eyes, with Anne-Marie Demassener. He had not himself known for what he had hoped. Some undefined desire to make her depend on him for safety, to show her that he was at least something to be regarded with interest by the most uninterested eyes, was all that he could grasp. Now every second those

hopes were deserting him with a measurable speed. If there were twelve hours more of silence he must return to London, to Mrs. Meadmore's and a succession of incurious friends who would not have noticed his absence. And of twelve hours even a second was a distinct proportion.

He had been a romantic fool and refused to face an obvious truth, he considered, standing in the little cobbled square, into which he had once been dismissed by Anne-Marie Demassener. Watching her own face in her mirror in Sebastian Lintz's room, and with less absorption Kapper's threatening hand, she had demonstrated her independence to all but the blindest eyes. She will never need my protection, Oliver Chant thought, with a grudging bitterness, and with a deeper, more ravaging pain; if there is no message to-morrow I shall never see her again. How foolish had been his second visit to the palace, to substitute, as his final vision, for a face pressed to his own a contemptuous, distant, rather tired regard.

To exchange for this memory some glance, though directed at another, which would contain no contempt, became to Chant that night

the most absorbing object. These were men whom it was important for him to see, arrangements which had been left ill-defined, but the morrow, he felt convinced, would only bring a repetition of silence, and then neither men nor arrangements would matter to him ever again. He looked at his watch. There were two hours to curfew, and in that time he had to gather a memory which would serve him, if not for life, at least until the pain of this journey had faded, five years, two years, one year. However short the period, he felt dimly that it would be the most important of his life; the period of greatest pain is always the period of greatest perception.

It occurred to him that he might go straight to the palace and ask for her, but the idea was immediately dismissed, for it would be only to substitute another vision of contempt for the one which was already his. He must see her without being seen, and he marshalled his memories of the palace to assist him. The room in which they had dined faced the square from an upper floor. It could not be overlooked. From the garden he had seen through the windows of the drawing-room, and by standing on the garden wall it was possible that he might see

within and remain himself in darkness. It was in any case his only chance, and must be taken, although that wall and the palace square were uneasily haunted by the memory of the young police officer.

When he entered the square no policeman was to be seen. Demassener, it appeared, required no particular guard. He was ready to take the risk of an ordinary householder, whose sole protection against any dark forces waiting outside the ring of his own firelight is the occasional passing of a policeman on a long beat. The only light in the square was opposite the palace, where the Provincial Museum stuck numerous sham-Gothic pinnacles into the sky, like pins into a dark blue velvet cushion. The real danger, as Chant had already discovered, was noise, the dislodgement of a stone, the scrape of a heel on brickwork.

Now he appreciated the advantage of his previous climb. He knew the place where a brick had slipped from the perpendicular, and where the slight corrosion of the mortar gave room for fingers. At his third attempt, but with more noise than he desired, he reached the top of the wall. His clothes were dusty, but un-

torn, and the fingers of his right hand were bleeding a little under the nails, where the powdery mortar had penetrated. The square was still empty, and where he sat was dark. Before him a narrow patch of wall was lit by a ray of light shining from a closed window of the palace. There was silence in the square. Not even a dog barked, but along the beam of light came a sound of music, muffled by a close barrier of glass. Beneath it the magnolia lay like a dark altar from which emerged the white shapes of unlit candles. It was incredible that there, a few nights before, he had held Anne-Marie Demassener in his arms. Now across the empty garden, along the ray of light, his eyes sought her and hoped for no more than to intercept without her knowledge a glance meant for another.

Unreasonably Chant was surprised to see in the drawing-room a slowly stirring mass of figures. He had never thought of Demassener's wife in relation to others in the town. It had never occurred to him that there must be many to whom a meeting with Anne-Marie Demassener was no more than a social duty, an every-day occurrence, that one man might say to another,

"Where are you dining to-night?" and the other answer, without any stirring of the heart by words which to Chant would beat with the excitement of music, "At the palace."

Yet it was only natural, he realised now, that the Dictator's wife should entertain her husband's supporters and that, while there was no dancing in Trier, there should be dancing at the palace. If it had not been for their last meeting and his unforgivable words, he, too, might have been invited, and instead of perching precariously upon a wall in a cold night, he might have held her in his arms in the presence of others, unquestioned.

He crept a little towards the edge of the shadow, leaning forward as far as he was able without being caught by light, in order to distinguish the figures in the room. To him it was full of unimportant people, innumerable stiff replicas of Captain Kraft, elderly women with piled white hair and a sparkle of jewels, who would temporarily extinguish all hope of his catching sight of Anne-Marie Demassener by standing before the window and unfurling enormous white feathery fans, like the bosoms of matronly and giant birds. At last, after a

flutter of bald heads bowing and of white-gloved fingers, they would be fetched away by small men with grey pointed beards, who would propel them out of sight with a child-like lack of rhythm.

Chant peered and peered, the tips of his fingers numbed by the frosty air. It seemed incredible that she could be found among this swaying crowd of old people, sprinkled here and there by Captain Krafts who were younger only in their years. The dancers were like the contents of an old clothes shop changed by a magic wand into jewelled garments, which yet retained in the metamorphosis the old lack-lustre hopelessness, the drooping attitudes.

"I am for the old," Chant remembered Demassener saying. If these are the old, he thought, I am not ashamed of being for the young.

He felt less need for shame than ever when at last he saw Anne-Marie Demassener in a wine-coloured dress emerge from the slow undulation of the dancers, only to be lost again, so that little more could be retained in the memory than a sense of slimness and of colour, like the impression of a king-fisher that darts

from a dark grove to a dark grove. Presently he saw her again, moving towards the window. He held his breath in expectation. She was obscured for a moment—it surprised him with what ease—by an elderly couple, and then she was at the window. She smiled at the partner she had left and raised a hand as far as her breast.

Then for an instant Chant thought that he had been seen, and he moved back into the shadow. She had ceased to smile and, even at a distance Chant believed that he could discern a sense of tension; she was leaning sideways against the window, with one hand pressed to the glass. To his close gaze the outspread fingers of her hand grew more distinct, as though her whole weight lay behind the pressure. Then from the stream of couples Demassener emerged, and Chant knew that it was her husband whom she had seen. Demassener came and stood beside her at the window, and they both in silence gazed into the garden.

But this, he protested, was not the face that he had come to see. It was no better than the expression with which he himself had left her.

She had been tired, angry, defensive then, and she was tired, angry, defensive now. She stared into the garden so fixedly that Chant was certain that she saw nothing, and only so stared in order that her eyes might avoid Demassener's. After a little Demassener spoke—so Chant gathered from the motion of his head, which he jerked back towards the music and the dancers. They were like great actors in a silent and trivial film who cannot forget the echoes of a finer play and who instil into mean actions an unintelligible significance. Anne-Marie Demassener, with her eyes still fixed upon the dark garden, shook her head. Demassener spoke again, his mouth twisted a little, perhaps by nerves, perhaps by pain; he put out his hand and laid it on her arm, and the deliberation of the movement gave it an air of timidity. Chant leant forward absorbed by the scene of which he was the only witness. To the whole world beside, as represented by the slow intertwining elderly dancers, they had turned their backs, but to him they played their parts full face. And Chant felt none of the shame of a spy. He was too fascinated by the significance of their least action. Between these two lay a mystery, into

which he had blunderingly stumbled. He had said to her at their last meeting, the impression of which he was trying to overlay, "I know you don't love your husband," but that he knew was a crude and incomplete reading. Surely now, if he leant forward and examined every movement with care, he would discover the secret.

When her husband put a hand on her arm, Anne-Marie Demassener seemed to straighten and stiffen. It was as though she was trying to fling off from the surface of her skin all impression of his touch. She hates him, Chant thought, with unashamed exultation, but a moment later he found he had again been guilty of a crudeness, of a want of perception. These two were not ordinary people whose actions could be classed as black or white. Even as the thought of her hate crossed Chant's mind she turned to Demassener with what might have been an uncontrollable motion of invitation. The figure beside her bent forward, and for a second Chant had the pain of believing that they would embrace, there, in the window, like young lovers, oblivious of the dancers, and the elderly women and the Captain Krafts. He was spared

the pain of the fact, though he retained the knowledge that it had so nearly occurred. Something too sudden and too swift for him to discern prevented it. It may have been a thought, for no person separated them. All of which Chant was aware was the hand withdrawn, the thin, tired figure bowing stiffly to his wife, and Anne-Marie Demassener again alone, with fingers beating on the window-pane.

She moved a little to her husband's place, and from standing half a dozen yards from where Chant sat, she was suddenly beside him. The light had taken her head and shoulders and cast the dark essentials of them upon the patch of wall. As a lover touching the face of the beloved may feel a desire to grasp the bone beneath the beauty, which was only fuel to the first fire and with which he can now, he is certain, so easily dispense, Chant felt his heart go out to the dark outline, which, robbed of all the attributes of body, might have been the spirit itself. Leaning forward into the light he put his lips to the wall.

When he raised his face he knew that he had been seen. It was not that Anne-Marie Demassener was watching him. Far from it;

her gaze was fixed, if it was fixed on anything but a thought, on a distant corner of the garden. But she was smiling, as she had smiled before when their eyes had met through the translucent, intimate medium of glass.

CHAPTER VIII

AND after all the message came. Early next morning Chant was roused by a knock on the door, and the proprietor of the gasthaus entered. The old man held out a telegram and waited in an attitude of commiseration, as though to his mind the urgency of such a message could mean nothing but evil.

The telegram contained the information that Chant's uncle was well and would welcome a visit. It was addressed from a number in the Schloss-strasse at Coblenz, rashly it seemed to Chant, for if the police were interested in his movements, they would have the house watched. The telegram had been received at Trier at eight o'clock, and it was now eight-thirty. Half an hour had been taken in carrying the telegram a few hundred yards from the office in the Fleische-strasse. He asked the old man when the next train would leave for Coblenz.

"One leaves in five minutes. You will not be able to catch it," the old man said. "The next

is at nine o'clock."

Chant now felt certain that the house in the Schloss-strasse would be under observation when he arrived. But he had this advantage over the police. At the worst he had aroused their suspicions. They had not yet connected him with the murder, and he had not been watched, he felt sure, in Trier. Nor could he regard the world that morning, even Weber's stupidity, with a jaundiced eye, when he remembered the smile of Anne-Marie Demassener.

Chant saw no reason why the police should lack data on which to exercise their minds. Before he left the gasthaus he sent a telegram to his uncle in the Schloss-strasse, stating that while he hoped to be in Coblenz that morning, he was not sure whether he would have time to call till the afternoon. He would be staying the night. Never before had Chant spent money on an unnecessarily long telegram with such satisfaction. He was certain that the delivery would be delayed, while the police, like commentators, examined "interior evidence" for truth.

For the first time since he had caught sight of Anne-Marie Demassener, Chant felt happy in the possession of an undivided object. The

smile which he had received last night, not directly, but transmitted, as it were, from the dark garden, by way of bush, and light and wall, had done more than supersede the previous image of contempt and an indifference only stirred by anger at his crudity. It had given him a hope and an object in the enterprise on which he had so blindly engaged himself. He chose to forget the impulsive, checked movement towards an embrace and only to remember Anne-Marie Demassener's tenseness at her husband's touch. She cannot love him, he thought, and exchanged for the image of himself as the saviour of a city from a not very evident tyranny, the more satisfactory image of one who would release Anne-Marie Demassener from a hated contact.

At the station Chant ran what he hoped would seem a casual eye over the passengers waiting for the train. Most of them were working men and women on their way to the outlying vineyards, but almost immediately he singled out an exception, a tall fair-haired man, who stood against the wall close to the ticket barrier reading a newspaper. A new raincoat was draped over his arm, and an air of efficiency made his

early arrival surprising; he had the appearance of a man who would reach the station always on the stroke of the required hour. Chant passing in front of him made a sudden movement towards the barrier, then stopped and turned in time to see the newspaper lowered.

Chant stamped his feet as though to warm himself. "The train is late?" he asked, and the man replied politely that he thought it must be overdue. A clock hanging conspicuously in front of them showed the time to be still one minute to nine. Chant offered the other a cigarette; the man commented, with eagerness, on the coldness of the air; Chant mentioned that he was on his way to Coblenz, and inquired how long the journey took; the man told him an hour and a half, and lit Chant's cigarette with one of his own matches. It seemed natural when the train drew in that they should climb into the same carriage. Chant was sure that the man was glad of the opportunity, and he himself preferred to keep a watcher under his own eye.

On the platform at Coblenz Chant held out a hand. He had begun to enjoy himself. "I have liked our conversation," he said. "Is there

any hope of seeing you again?" The moment he had spoken he wondered whether his irony had not been too evident, but the fair-haired stranger seemed unaware of it. He bowed with a slight betraying click of the heels and his fingers went up to his moustache as though at a woman's compliment. "I, too," he said, "but you, I see," with an eye on Chant's suitcase, "are staying overnight."

"Possibly," Chant said, "possibly." For why, he asked himself, should I do the business of the police for them? And then because his ambiguous words demanded an explanation, "You see, I have come here to see my uncle who has been ill. He may wish me to stay a day or two. In any case, I shall book a room." They had passed through the barrier together, and now at the door of a taxi, Chant again spoke to his lingering acquaintance. "I am going to the Hotel Germania in the Schloss-strasse. Can I give you a lift?"

The man refused, but Chant, gazing through the little window in the back of his cab at a taxi which closely followed his, could see no candid reason for the refusal.

At the Hotel Germania Chant broke the

legendary English custom of immediately demanding a bath. He booked his room without seeing it, gave his suitcase to a man in a green baize apron who was cleaning the shoes of late risers, and guided by the scent of cooking greens walked straight through the kitchen and out through the back door. To a chorus of amused, helpful, voices he explained that he was English and knew no German.

In the road a couple of children were scrawling meaningless, but apparently significant symbols in the dust with pointed sticks. Otherwise the street was empty, and Chant, though curious to see how the fair-haired man would watch the hotel, was willing to leave him undisturbed in the Schloss-strasse.

He was in no hurry to reach the rendezvous, and after learning at a small *bäkerie* the position of the house, he strolled down to the Rhine. It was a sunny morning, though the air was cold, and Chant was only one of many who leant over the railings of the parade and watched the strange, broad paddle steamers passing. Across the river the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein rose like a brooding, rain-filled cloud, making the day a little chillier than it would otherwise have

been, Coblenz smaller and more frivolous, like a moral youth faced by a purposeful and prolific matron.

A tug passed, and the bridge of boats that lay across the water to Ehrenbreitstein opened to let it by. Behind, like a string of sausages, trailed a succession of long, low barges, black, flat and close to the water, rising at the bows into a small gay house and a bridge, which had room for nothing but a wheel and a man who plodded round it as patiently as a donkey. A girl looked out of a window and waved, a boy sat on a hatch in a patch of sun tootling on a mouth-organ, washing in bright colours filled with wind and danced through the tug's smoke. "Rotterdam" said the barges in bold white letters, plodding patiently past Coblenz.

They were so intimate, the barges, contained so much of all which is expressed by "home," fires and food and the wind shut outside, that Chant found it hard to visualize a similar barge stacked with arms slipping down by night past the Customs to Trier, to barricades and shouting and exultation and, one supposed, death, but beyond all and equally incongruously, to Anne-Marie Demassener. For she did not "go"

with the word home. Never in his least likely dreams had Chant imagined a peaceful, everyday existence with her, of rising, sleeping, meals. They would wither into insignificance at her touch, he thought. At the best life with her would be a swift, adventurous flight towards the grave.

But even the thought of trying to place that mystery in any setting which it had not already touched with magic sobered Chant. He turned his back on the river and blond children and a boy making tunes on a piece of tin. He had, when all was said and thought, a purpose. That was an unusual and a proud thing in the world to-day.

From the trees and the grass in the centre of the Neustadt Chant could see the bend of the Schloss-strasse and the house which he had somehow to enter. At the edge of the trees facing the house and with their backs turned to him two men sat on a wooden bench. They wore neat grey raincoats with belts pulled tight and soft green hats. From their stillness they might have been old men asleep in a warm ray. The sun shifting between the first green buds of spring cast gold coins on the gravel at their

feet, but they sat like millionaires, incorruptible and oblivious of the ancient spendthrift. Chant could not see their expression, but in spite of their bodies' immobility, he suspected that the eyes were open and fixed on the house in front. He had eluded one watcher, but here were two who were not to be eluded. If a gun went off behind them he did not believe they would move, unless perhaps they shifted irritably their thighs. He had expected a greater subtlety and more possibilities of discovering a chink in the watchers' awareness. This crude, open stare at a doorway confounded him.

From where he stood, partly sheltered by a tree, Chant was able to examine the obvious features of the house. A tall stiff building, with wrought iron doorways turned back on to an empty hall, it offered no shelter from the gaze of the watchers to any shy visitor, nor any clue to the kind of person who inhabited it. The open doorway suggested a block of flats or offices, and Weber's telegram contained no indication of the owner's name. Chant had discovered at the *bäkerie* that there was no other entrance.

He looked at his watch. It was twelve

o'clock. He had been two hours in Coblenz, and that was two hours too long. If they were to reach Pallien with the arms in the early morning, they must leave Coblenz that afternoon. The delay seemed to Chant, watching the two imperturbable backs, an impossible waste of time. Behind him a clock began to tell out the hour; an hour surely when all good Germans should be sitting down to their sausages and beer, but the two heads before him did not quiver with the faintest recognition of an urgent call. But a minute later, as a sign perhaps that the striking clock had not gone unregarded, both men with a simultaneous movement, as though under the orders of a drill sergeant, drew from their pockets slabs of chocolate and began to eat, with eyes still fixed upon the open doorway in the Schloss-strasse. Then Chant did indeed despair of entering the house unobserved, and since to remain waiting under a tree, like a lover delaying for a faithless girl, must mean the defeat of all his plans, he stepped forward. But at his first movement he felt a hand laid on his elbow. He jumped round, his head a hive of images of fair-haired men clicking heels and fingering small moustaches, which all resolved

into one good-humoured face.

"Weber," he said, with relief.

"You have seen them?" he asked, and when Chant nodded, he added: "Another one is waiting outside your hotel."

"How did you know?" Chant asked, gazing with veneration at that broad, apparently stupid smile.

"I followed you from the station," Weber said. "I did right? But I lost you at your hotel. You gave us both the slip. I thought if I watched the Schloss-strasse I should see you."

"Your telegram," Chant said. "Was it wise? How can we get into the house or leave it again without being seen and followed?"

Weber grinned and laid a finger along the edge of his nose. "That is the joke," he said. "We do not want to go into that house. A friend of mine lives there, that is all. The American gentleman whom we wish to meet lives in the old town. I have made an appointment with him this morning, and now we will not be troubled by these men. Look at them," he added, with a touch of scorn, "eating chocolate. That is not a meal for a man, Herr Chant."

The "American gentleman" was named Crane, and his profession was that of an engineer, or so Chant gathered from a brass plate outside the door of his house, a smaller one than that in the Schloss-strasse and leaning a little for support against a shabby gasthaus. Some wooden sheds shut off the view of the Moselle, whose presence was revealed over the roofs by a reek of smoke from the funnels of tugs. Five hundred yards away, where the Moselle ran into the Rhine, a giant emperor sat at ease upon a monstrous horse, which pawed with verdigrised hoofs against the fragile sky.

A woman showed them into a stone-paved hall. There were no chairs, soapy patches discoloured the flags and an emaciated mop leant against a flight of wooden steps. Through a door with glass panes came the sound of a drawling voice speaking bad German. It seemed to be reiterating one phrase which Chant was unable to catch, a phrase always met with the rapid flood of another's speech. There was a whiff of cigar smoke and an occasional clink of glasses.

"I thought you had an appointment?" Chant said, shifting from one tired foot to another.

He heard the hiss of a syphon and the rapid click, click, click of an inefficient petrol-lighter. Then the phrase and the flood of talk.

Weber shrugged his shoulders. Americans, he explained, were always busy.

"Who is he, anyway?" Chant asked. "Can he do anything for us?" for it did not seem right that revolution should have so dingy an ante-chamber and depend for its success on the word of one American living in a tumbled house by the Moselle.

"I know of no one else," Weber said. "Demassener has dealt with him," and both men straightened at the long squeak of a withdrawn chair. The volley of words had been followed by a dropping fire, a door opened and shut, and there was silence. Then someone began to pack away glass after glass laboriously in a drawer.

"Do you mean," said Chant, eyeing with astonishment the wet flags, the mop, the wooden stairs, "that Demassener comes here?"

"He did not always live in a palace," Weber said. "Now, of course, he has others to do his business for him. They say that Herr Crane let him have the first instalment of arms on credit.

I cannot understand that. Demassener must have got round him somehow."

It was a strange vision, that of Anne-Marie Demassener's husband whom Chant had first seen rising from a wilderness of formal, antique chairs, "getting round" the Mr. Crane, who now appeared in the doorway of his office. How shabby, Chant wondered, was the underside of even the most selfless success. For Mr. Crane, the man so essential to arms hidden in dark barges slipping through the night, to barricades and all the details of an adventurous dream, had a fat face and small eyes and was dressed in a mustard-coloured suit with brown shiny shoes and trousers that bagged at the knees. He said something contemptuously to Weber in German, but when the barge-keeper introduced his companion, Mr. Crane's manner changed.

"I am very pleased to meet you," he said, dwelling fondly on his "r." He extended a warm hand stained yellow with nicotine, and Chant took it with distaste. "Now," said Mr. Crane, with a contemptuous shake of the head at Weber, "we shall be able to talk real business. Come right in, Mr. Chant."

They passed through the glass door, and Mr. Crane waved a hand round a narrow room, which contained a padded, swivel chair, a desk of red mahogany, and two straight-backed chairs. "This is my little office, Mr. Chant," he explained, and added with a certain vagueness as to the limits of diplomatic privilege, "When you sit here you sit in America. Have a whisky?"

Chant shook his head, but Mr. Crane ignored his refusal. Into a glass along whose sides still clung a few yellow drops he poured a generous three fingers. "A splash, Mr. Chant? There's no prohibition in this country yet, though I'm not, mind you, saying anything against prohibition. (Now wet your tongue with that, old man. That's not wood alcohol.) What's all right in New York, Mr. Chant—not that you or me would have to go without a drink there." Mr. Crane leant forward and breathed a few spirituous fumes confidently in Chant's direction. "Boy, I could tell you a few funny stories about prohibition."

"I should be glad to hear them another time," Chant interrupted, without disguising his impatience, "but my friend and I are in a hurry. We must leave Coblenz this afternoon."

"Ah, you are trying to hustle me, Mr. Chant." With a magniloquent gesture he drained his whisky, and spluttering a little raised two hands towards the ceiling. "Oh, boy," he said, "until you've seen me hustle, you don't know what hustling is."

"I'm glad of that, Mr. Crane, because you see Mr. Weber must leave this afternoon with a thousand revolvers, fifty machine-guns and as much ammunition as you can spare."

Mr. Crane leant back in his swivel chair with an expression of fuddled amusement. "You are joking, Mr. Chant? A thousand revolvers? Fifty machine guns. Has Ehrenbreitstein run out? Have another whisky?" Chant again shook his head, and again Mr. Crane would take no denial. The syphon sizzed, and Chant tried to recall how many times he had heard the sound while waiting in the passage. "Have a weed?" Mr. Crane pushed across the desk a dry object that justified its title. "Not now? Put it in your pocket then. Plenty more here."

"I'm ready to pay cash down," Chant said softly, twisting his hat between his fingers, his eyes on the floor, mouth pursed to an invisible whistle.

"What's that? What's that?" said Mr. Crane. He stared round-eyed at this phenomenon who was willing to pay cash down for a thousand untested revolvers. Then he looked at his glass. It was empty. "Have another whisky?" he asked absent-mindedly, pouring himself out two judicious fingers. This time he drank slowly, cautiously, with concentration. "I'll tell you what," he said. "I wouldn't do it for anyone else. If you pay me cash down I'll let you have fifty revolvers first thing to-morrow morning."

"I'll be gone to-morrow morning," Chant said, and the small eyes in front of him grew as wistful as those of an old man, past the grand climacteric, who watches the vanishing of his final chance of love. Chant rose impatiently to his feet. "This is useless, Weber," he said in German. "We may as well be gone."

"Say," said Mr. Crane, regaining control of his amazed muscles, "what's all this hurry? Sit down, Mr. Chant. I don't say that I couldn't let you have a case of fifty revolvers to-day. It's inconvenient, mind, and you'll have to pay extra."

"Fifty revolvers are no good to me," Chant

replied, standing with his hat in his hand ready to depart. "I have said that I want a thousand. Besides fifty machine-guns."

"Well, that's impossible." Mr. Crane breathed a sigh of relief at the word "impossible." No danger, he seemed to indicate, of being hustled off one's feet there. "I couldn't lay my hands on more than five guns if you were to pay me their weight in gold."

"I'll take those five," Chant said, with a promptitude that sent Mr. Crane's hand nervously back towards the whisky bottle. "And now as to these revolvers. . ."

"Say," remarked Mr. Crane in a rather high voice, "what's the game, that's what I'd like to know? What's all this hurry? You'll be getting me into trouble. You seem to think"—his voice became aggrieved—"that I *bristle* with arms." He raised his hands, "Search me," and added, with apparent inconsequence, "I'm not a hair-brush."

"Look here"—Chant sat down again, and drummed impatient fingers on the red mahogany desk—"don't you want to do business? Here I am, ready to pay cash down for your goods. You've offered me five machine-

guns. I'll take them. Now what's the greatest number of revolvers you can pack on to Herr Weber's barge this afternoon? I'm ready to pay more for the trouble."

"I might let you have a hundred."

"Is that your last word? I've asked you for a thousand. Good heavens, Mr. Crane, can't you understand that this is serious. We are not setting up a small shop. What use are a hundred revolvers for what we intend to do?"

Mr. Crane ran his fingers through his scanty straw-coloured hair. "You don't understand, Mr. Chant," he protested. "I'm an honest tradesman who doesn't mind helping a chum to a few revolvers now and then, even though it's against the law. People must defend themselves, and I don't mind risking a fine for the sake of a chum who's played straight with me in the past. But quod's another matter. A thousand revolvers! Why, that's revolution."

"But not here. And I've heard it said, Mr. Crane, that you haven't been so shy in the past. Demassener——"

"Ah, now he was a regular red blooded fellow. I admit I did take a risk there. I won't say that it was altogether him either. He's

got a fine wife, Mr. Chant. Say, I'm not soft, but if you were to say I was a bit touched, you wouldn't say a lie." Mr. Crane leant forward and not noticing the set face opposed to him moulded a body in the air with his hands, a body to which Chant could not but attach the other attributes of skin, and eyes, the complex mask of a mystery which he could not fathom. To implant living particles into the shape of air drawn by Mr. Crane's lecherous fingers was a desecration, but he could not refrain, any more than he could close his ears to Mr. Crane's words, flung aimlessly out of a mind whose real thought was how far he could trust the young and careless spender opposite him. "Say, she's a prize bitch," said Mr. Crane, his fingers building up a body from feet to knees, from knees to breasts, while Chant, in spite of anger and disgust and sense of a slow stain, watched his hands with fascination. "Slim? I'd say so, but not so that you wouldn't know she was there."

Yes, I want you like that, Chant thought, and with brutality, I want my hands on you. I believed that I loved your spirit, and I kissed your shadow on the wall. But I know less of your spirit than that man knows of your body. I

want you naked, against me, struggling, in darkness, and I shall never have you now. This man is taking you from me. And with bitterness, what does it matter? This is only lust, this restlessness, this want, this hate of you; but even as he formed the silent words, a self that lay beneath the angry and tormented surface astounded him by the assertion that lust no more accounted for his restlessness or his hate than two hands smoothing the air really enclosed a body.

"I wouldn't mind changing places with Demassener one night," said Mr. Crane. "Yes, I was real touched by her. Why, I gave him credit," said Mr. Crane, laughing to think how business had been swept aside by a softer emotion. "And I don't believe she'd be too difficult either," he added, his eyes brooding moistly on impossible scenes, sweeping the air but never resting on his own fat, yellow hands, soiled coat and bagging trousers.

"Let's get back to business," said Chant. In another moment he would have smashed his fist into the thoughtful eyes in an attempt to break the dreams into unmendable fragments.

"Why, yes, business, sure," Mr. Crane mur-

mured, coming back reluctantly from his own darkness. His thoughts had softened him; he regarded Chant with less caution. "What's your bank?" he said quite briskly, and when Chant told him, reached for the telephone. "You don't mind my checking that?" he asked.

"They won't tell you," said Chant.

"Oh, I've got a friend in each of the banks," Mr. Crane replied, humming a little under his breath, receiver to his ear. Apparently what he heard a little later satisfied him. "I'll tell you what," he said, slapping the receiver down with an air of decision, "I'll let you have five hundred by midnight, and that's my last word. It'll cost me more than it'll cost you."

"And my last word," said Chant, "is that midnight's too late. We can't leave later than four o'clock."

"All right, then," Mr. Crane sounded grudging and aggrieved, "five hundred revolvers and ammunition by four o'clock."

"And five machine guns."

"Say," said Mr. Crane, smiling sourly, "you ought to be in business. You wouldn't leave a bald man's scalp alone. You can have them, but it leaves me cleared out. And now let's see

the cash down," and he named a sum which must have assured him a profit of at least fifty per cent. Chant did not quarrel with it. He was anxious to end an interview which had already proved too long for safety. "You shall have it," he said, "when the last case has been put on board." Nor did Mr. Crane contest that final condition. Never in his most ambitious dreams had he reaped so high a profit.

That afternoon Chant stood beside the quay, watching the wooden cases stowed on board. Late sunlight touched the Moselle and gilded the thin wreaths of mist which came up from the water and twined themselves round the jack-boots, the helmet and the sword of the giant emperor. Down the river the tug belched grey smoke impatiently into the air. In a bierhaus with an open door occasional glimpses of Mr. Crane could be caught leaning across a table towards a bribed and amiable customs officer and telling tales of prohibition in bad German. The officer smiled and belched, and Mr. Crane laughed and caressed his thighs and sometimes hiccupped with a surprising gentility. The tug dropped lower and lower in the water, a deep-toned clock from somewhere in the old town

struck four, and Chant turned his back on the convivial companions and went to find Weber.

"It's four o'clock," he said.

"Twenty more cases," Weber replied with some gloom. "I have stopped examining them. We have no time to be careful. I am covering them with cases of Rhine wine, but if the customs at Cochem search the barge at all they will find them. There will be only one layer on top."

"You were so hopeful," Chant said.

"Yes, but everything has gone wrong. This delay—and five hundred revolvers. That is not enough, unless the police refuse to shoot."

"How far is it to the frontier, to Cochem?"

"It will take us five and a half hours at the very least with the current against us. And as much again to Pallien. If we do not get away soon we shall be caught by daylight."

"And then prison for the lot of us," Chant murmured.

"You think prison?" Weber laughed. "For twenty-four hours perhaps. Then we shall be shot. It's better than hanging unless they use recruits. No, if these arms are found at Cochem, I shall jump overboard and swim for it. One

may as well be shot in the water as in a yard."

"There's the last case," said Chant with a cheerfulness that he did not feel, shaking his shoulders a little, as though by a physical act he could rid himself of the depression that lay across his spirit.

It was half-past four when they left the quay, and across a widening gap Chant saw for the last time the figure of Mr. Crane, American engineer, diminishing moment by moment, as the tug swung the barge into the centre of the river. He still leant across the table in the bierhaus, breathing out intimate spirituous stories. Chant, catching a sight of raised fingers modelling a form with the dexterity and accuracy of lust, turned his face to the river, which, flowing hard against their tug, seemed with all else allied to frustrate his return. With every hard-fought minute the water turned more gold in the last sun. On his left hand the hills stood back in shadow, like pillars in a dim cathedral, lit only in the central aisle by the bright light of candles. On his right the hills fell close to the water's edge, precipitous and rugged where they were reflected in the river, but slop-

ing backward into acres of green vines. After Cattener the soil of the hills became a brilliant rust, when touched by sun. Little beaches of grass and pebbles ran out into the Moselle and made small waterfalls down the bars of sand. The tug and barge slipped by, disturbing only for a moment with their wash, the runlets of white foam, always in motion, one rank eternally chasing the other but never progressing.

The light withdrew slowly, tarnishing the gold, as the evening passed in a silence that neither Weber nor Chant thought to break. Both stood on the small bridge at the rear of the barge, and Weber constantly shifted the great wheel, like the round table of King Arthur, that left small room for movement. Lights began to come out in the villages on their right, and the houses seemed to cluster more closely round the gigantic churches. Occasionally the hills retreated and admitted orchards, the white painted trunks of apple trees glimmering like silver birches. At Cronner a group of lights in the sky, like low, enormous stars, represented the castle, beneath whose invisible walls they crept. The even lap, lap of water curling from the barge's side was the only sound, save when

a church clock struck the hour in a village by the bank. When they had been about two hours on the water, they heard a bell ringing for Benediction with the leisure and melancholy of a religion that offers its fruit only after many years. In the bridge house Weber had lit a lamp.

Once Chant said "How long?" and Weber replied, "Two hours." They ate sandwiches in a stiff, constrained silence, as the last light slipped from the highest point of the hills into the valley of space and left what was for them the whole world unlit. One hour to Cochem, and Weber poured himself out a glass of whisky, and Chant lit a cigarette, perhaps only to convince himself that his hand was steady. He was unconvinced and flung both match and cigarette petulantly into the water, one small flame quenched by cold and night and air as soon as it had left his fingers, the other making a bright, rapid dart, and for an immeasurable instant lighting a circle no bigger than a farthing of purple, running water. A shadow arched above them, becoming in a rush of sparks from the tug's funnel the solid masonry of a bridge. As though in leaving it behind they had passed

behind a curtain shutting off from a dark and empty theatre the bustle and movement of the last scene shifters, dozens of small lights along the river sprang into a restless visibility.

"Cochem," said Weber, his fingers clenching tightly round his glass. "We have gained a quarter of an hour," he added, with a forced cheerfulness, and then seeing the strained lines of his own face reflected in his companion's, he laughed. "You must look more at ease than that, Herr Chant," he said. Both men jumped a little as the tug's syren split the darkness. The scream came back hollowly from the enclosing hills. A searchlight from the town made a wide arc across the sky, before it swept the river and came to rest on a stone stretch of quay and a couple of wooden sheds; two or three men in blue uniforms and peaked caps darted hither and thither like motes in its white ray. Before the light had touched them and flung them into motion, it had illumined for an instant a tall conical hill crowned by a kind of Otranto Castle, which seemed to block the river and the barge's progress. Chant caught only a glimpse of tiers of towers, like the levels of a wedding cake, aspiring towards a central pinnacle, which drew

away from them as a rose avoids its cohort of reaching thorns.

"Listen," Weber was saying. "The Customs officer is a friend of mine. He has often allowed me to take through some barrels of Rhine wine. That is what we are carrying now, remember. As a rule, he does not search the boat, because he does not wish to know of the wine. We will give him a glass in the cabin, and you must slip a few marks across with the wine."

"How many?" Chant asked.

"Five, perhaps. Ten if you feel generous." Weber shrugged his shoulders carelessly. "He is a heavy, self-important fellow," he said through the rattle and clank and grind of the tug's engines, his hands on the enormous wheel, his eyes ahead, "but one must keep friendly with a man like that."

"If he searches the barge?" Chant asked, his head full of innumerable questions which he would never have the time to put, feeling with angry resentment the inadequacy of his instructions.

"Knock him down," said Weber briefly, "and jump into the river. There are woods on the other side." Chains rattled and a number

of voices shouting instructions came up to the wheel-house with disconcerting clarity. They had been accustomed there for the last five hours to silence, or lowered voices, and the regular lapping of the water.

"Come, Herr Chant," Weber said, and with abrupt, careless defiance in the sound of his foot-falls, descended the steps to the little platform in front of the cabin door. A man had flung a plank across a gap of water to the quay. The engines of the tug were still, there was a slight bitter wind, and the smoke from the tug's funnel became visible as it was blown backwards into the illumination of the searchlight. Two men in blue uniform emerged from the smoke and crossed the plank with regular metallic foot-steps. The man in front, dark, and wiry with a clean-shaven face, touched his cap, like an officer returning the salute of subordinates. "Passports, please."

He examined Weber's with some care. Chant's he waved away with a smile. "English?" he said. "I have lived in London. Do you know London? The Tottenham Court Road?"

"Ah, Weber, you again," the second man

was saying in the friendly but patronising voice of a schoolmaster welcoming back to work, with mockery, a stupid boy. He had a heavy grey moustache and his eyes seemed permanently a little raised, so that he always spoke above the heads of those whom he addressed.

"Yes, me, Herr Muller. Will you step into the cabin on such a cold night and take a glass before we examine the cargo?" He turned to the passport officer. "I know from experience, Herr Mann, that I cannot tempt you."

"Ah, but this time you may," the passport officer said, with a bow to Chant, "it is long since I have had an opportunity of speaking a few words to one who knows the Tottenham Court Road."

With a slight stiffening of his whole body which conveyed to Chant his surprise and his apprehension, Weber stepped back to allow the two officers to precede him into the cabin. Chant noticed that they both wore revolver holsters. This, in the last resort, was to be no simple business of knocking down one, unarmed man.

A padded leather seat ran round the sides of the cabin. The flame of an unshaded oil lamp in the centre of the table smoked continuously

up its glass chimney and sent blue shadows curvetting across the close, companionable walls. A window hung with white lace curtains looked out on to the quay.

Herr Muller, without waiting for the others to worm their way in at the narrow door, took a central position on the couch. He looked displeased. "I thought, Mann, that you were busy with a report?"

"Ah, yes, but I can spare a few minutes. These gentlemen, I have no doubt, are anxious to be off." Herr Mann, with a bow, granted to Chant the precedence of sitting. "This cold weather," he added, with his eye sideways on Weber, "gives one a thirst. Do you know the 'Double Crown'?" he asked Chant suddenly. Chant was unable to avoid a start. His mind had been contemplating impossible schemes for persuading the passport officer to leave them alone with Muller. They could not bribe Muller with Mann present, and if they did not bribe him, Chant was certain, with one glance at the heavy moustache and the supercilious eyes, which were now smouldering resentfully, that he would examine the cargo with an extreme conscientiousness.

“‘The Double Crown?’” he said, attaching to the words some mystic importance, as though indeed they might be the passports to safety. “No, I am afraid——”

Herr Mann regarded him with suspicion. “You said that you knew the Tottenham Court Road. The ‘Double Crown’ is a bierhaus. I should have thought that you would have known the ‘Double Crown.’” His attention was distracted by the appearance at his elbow of a glass of wine. He sipped it and his eyes twinkled at Weber. “So,” he said, “Rhine wine. We now drink up all your bottles, eh, to avoid throwing good wine into the river? We will have quite a debauch. Have you much Rhine wine on board? But pardon me, that is my colleague’s business, not mine,” and he smiled politely at Muller, who sat and smouldered in an ominous silence. His wine stood before him untasted.

The passport officer waved his hand with an air of graceful leisure. “You have a cosy nest, Weber. Why, if you were in no hurry to reach Trier, we could spend a delightful evening—wine, song, only a woman lacking.”

“But then,” Weber said, with such venom in

his smile that it was fortunate that Mann's eyes were on his glass, "I have to get to Trier."

"Well, well, do not let me delay you," said Mann, stretching his legs and holding out his glass for more wine, "I can sit here and entertain this truly delightful bottle, while my colleague discovers contraband." He laughed with gaiety at his little joke, but he heard no echo of his mirth. Muller drained his glass. "I have never known you less busy, Mann," he said, with no attempt to disguise his petulance.

Mann looked up quickly, his eyes narrowed. "Am I in the way?" he asked. "If I intrude on family secrets let me know, and I will go at once."

"You are a fool," said Muller. "What possible secrets could there be? It is only that I get tired of your infantile chatter." In a fit of august rage he banged his glass on the table, fracturing its stem, but his eyes, gazing above the heads of his companions, were unaware of the mishap. "Come, Weber," he said. "I will see your cargo," and there was something in his tone which seemed to promise a full examination and no leniency for any bottles of Rhine wine. He rose majestically, buttoning

his heavy overcoat which hung round him like a perfect cylinder leaving his body, from shoulder to boots, shapeless, with no trace of humanity.

"Herr Mann," Weber said in a voice which to Chant seemed to advertise their apprehension, "would perhaps like another glass." He stood a fresh bottle at the passport officer's elbow. "There is no need to stint yourself, Herr Mann. Better be poured into a man than into a river."

Muller stepped outside and waited for Weber with impatience. "Mann is a fool," he said. "I will complain to the Dictator if I have to put up with much more of his impertinence. Secrets, indeed. What secrets could I have?" The gesture with which he turned on them was brutal in its significance. "Have you anything to declare?" Without waiting for an answer he led the way round the corner of the cabin to the body of the barge. Narrow plank walks ran between the stacked cases. Weber, Muller's back being turned, counted imaginary coins into the palm of his hand, and Chant pulled out his note-case. He felt a ten-mark note and relinquished it, his eyes travelling to

the towering, disdainful and majestic bulk before him. True, it was the sum which Weber had named, but he had not then foreseen this new, disastrous situation. Chant felt that he could no more offer that angry officer ten marks than he could offer ten shillings to a Cabinet minister. In his pocket-book there remained a choice between a fifty and a five hundred mark note. His fingers hesitated for a moment over the fifty and then rejected it. Surely it was foolish to economise in such a situation. He drew out the five hundred marks and slipped the case back into his pocket.

Muller was already bending towards a case when Weber coughed. "I have a little wine," he said, "which I am taking home for my own cellar. I thought that perhaps once again you would allow me to pay the duty directly to you."

The officer straightened himself. "You are making a habit of this, Weber. No, I do not think that I can allow it again. Will you please open that box and let me see the bottles?" Weber fetched a chisel from the cabin and prized open the lid. Inside two bottles lay on a bed of straw. Muller bent down and pulled the box on to the plank, exposing a similar case,

but one containing, as Chant knew, ten revolvers.

"More wine?" Muller asked, his fingers hovering over the box. He had only to lift it to notice the difference in the weight.

"Yes, more wine," Weber said sullenly. Chant could see the muscles shift beneath his jacket, his hand tighten on the chisel.

"You are carrying a lot of wine for your cellar, Weber," Muller commented, his eye travelling along the row of wooden cases, his fingers tapping the dangerous box.

"Some of it is mine," Chant said, "I have no intention of keeping it in Trier or of selling it. I am taking the boxes straight through unopened to Luxemburg."

"That is what you think, is it?" Herr Muller straightened himself. He put his hands deep in his overcoat pockets and straddled across the gangway. The delight of a schoolmaster faced with a child to ridicule glowed in his eyes. "Let me inform you, my friend, that I am the Customs officer at this station, and I am not accustomed to let boxes pass me unopened. And, therefore, if you please, you will take the chisel and you will go along this plank and you will open all the boxes bound for Luxemburg."

"I thought, perhaps," Chant said, "that you would do for me as you have done for my friend—allow me to pay you a proportion of the duty on the spot?"

"So, Weber,"—Muller lifted himself on his toes and let himself down again—"that is how you treat a confidence. You tell all your friends that they may come and profit by it. Our little arrangement was made purely for your benefit. I gain nothing by it, and now I am tired of it. Nor apparently do you consider that the arrangement might be misunderstood, if some lying version of it came to the ears of the Dictator."

"That," Weber said slowly and with exaggerated distinctness, "may not matter in a few weeks."

"What do you mean?" The supercilious eyes for the first time came down to the level of another's brow.

"Only this—that there is a lot of talk in Coblenz about the republic. People say——"

"Yes, yes?" it was evident that, even to the owner of that despotic and habitually degrading glance, talk, what people said, the gossip of frontiers, mattered greatly.

"Oh, they only say that loyalty to the

Dictator will not be very profitable presently. But, of course, I only tell you this, Herr Muller, to warn you that to loyal people, like you and me, there may be a hard time coming."

Muller stroked his moustache and let his enflamed eyes travel over the rows of cases. "I do not want to be unreasonable on a cold night," he said. "I will only require you to open a case here and there. For instance, you can begin on this," and he scraped the heel of his boot on the fatal box, to which some unrecognised, subconscious strand seemed to hold him tied.

"If I declare to you, Herr Muller, that all these boxes contain wine and pay you the duty now, perhaps it would save us both trouble." Chant held out the folded note.

"I never save myself trouble," Herr Muller retorted, with an asperity lacking in his previous dignified rebukes. It was as though the school-master were uncertain that the ridiculed child was not himself concealing a deeper ridicule. But he took the note, saying as he unfolded it: "Let us at least see, my friend, what you consider the duty should be."

Immediately Chant realised that he had made a mistake. He should have given Muller the

fifty-mark note, even the ten-mark note. He had disclosed some of the value which the cargo held for him. He had not regarded it as the bottles of Rhine wine, which it pretended to be, nor even the arms, which, in truth, it was, but as the password to bring him again into the presence of Anne-Marie Demassener. If ten thousand marks had been in his pocket he would have given them all, in the moment's madness, to the Customs officer. But the madness was over, directly he saw how dignity, superciliousness, asperity were all swept aside in astonishment at the value of the note, and how astonishment in turn gave way to suspicion.

Muller swung round towards the quay, and for a moment Chant thought that he would call to the uniformed men who had occasionally shown themselves at the doors of the wooden sheds. Weber, unaware of what had happened, but conscious of the danger, gripped the chisel and stepped a pace forward. Chant, with hands ready, in the event of Muller attempting to draw his revolver, moved closer to the officer's other side. But Muller did not shout. Faced by something mysterious, unknown and, he must have realised, dangerous, something for

which mere superciliousness was an inadequate attitude, he was hopelessly perplexed. He turned back from the quay, and all three men became suddenly still and statuesque in their respective poses.

After a long moment Muller said: "This is a lot of money."

"It is a big cargo," Chant replied, not shifting a foot, or making any motion of his hands away from their attitude of preparedness.

"I must see it," Muller said.

Then Weber spoke. He was the most at ease, or perhaps only the most desperate. "Would it not be better to let it pass?" he said slowly and with an unmistakable significance, which was, as it were, underlined by the chisel in his hand. He must have had a complete control over his nerves, for the chisel never wavered. "After all," he continued, "you have seen the wine. You cannot be expected to open every case on the boat."

"I must see them," Muller repeated, with a complete lack of confidence, his eyes shifting here and there above their heads.

"But surely," Weber went on, reasoning patiently, his mind apparently as cool as his

body was alert, "it would be better for you not to examine these cases. Think, Herr Muller, as long as you do not look in these boxes, you cannot know that they contain dutiable goods—Rhine wine. What we have declared, we have paid for. No one can hold you responsible for the goods you did not see."

It was almost as though Muller was the desperate one. With a sudden decision, as if trying to catch his unwilling muscles unaware and drive them along the honest course, he bent to the box and half lifted it towards the plank. A couple of uniformed subordinates strolled along the quay whistling in unison a sentimental tune. Muller neither heard nor saw them. He had become aware of the weight of the box, and at the same time fully aware of the two men closing in on him. He could not hear soft love tunes spilled idly into the night, when heart, brain and fearing body were all urging him to contrary actions. In that inhuman cylindrical bulk the human struggle was almost pathetically palpable, but neither Weber nor Chant could guess the outcome, when Muller let the box fall and straightened himself.

"You say that this is wine?" he asked, his gaze hovering between the two and fixing on neither.

"Wine," Chant said.

Muller no longer looked above their heads, but at their feet. His reply was mumbled. "All right. You have paid the duty. You may go on." He strode past them with an uncertain speed to the cabin.

From where Weber and Chant stood, doubtful whether this was the end or only the beginning, they heard a patter of voices, and then the two officers appeared from the door and crossed the plank gangway to the quay. Muller did not look back. The passport officer turned and waved and called something in a voice well muffled by wine about "the Tottenham Court Road." Both men disappeared into the wooden sheds.

"Will he give the alarm?" Chant said.

"I do not think so," Weber replied. "He always wants to be on the winning side, and now he does not know which that is. He will let us pass." And indeed five minutes later the lights of Cochem were behind.

CHAPTER IX

BETWEEN two and three in the morning they reached Pallien. There was no moon, and they had not passed the lights of a village for some time. In the darkness they slept in turn, first Weber, then Chant, then Weber again, Weber deeply, with even breathing, Chant brokenly in a series of half-conscious dozes. He had no such sense of fate as the calm German. Destiny was to him something which could be altered by his own actions, something which if he thought hard and continuously could be foreseen and forestalled. And there was much in their situation, he thought, which needed to be foreseen. It angered him to see Weber sleep so quietly, and to know that when his own turn came, his mind would be too full of questions to grasp more than the merest shreds of unconsciousness. Could it even be called unconsciousness, when so haunted by one face? It was as though the obscene fingers of Mr. Crane had unshaded for Chant his own need. Only when awake could he escape from it by other pressing doubts and

fears. What were they to do if Muller had telegraphed a warning to the police at Trier? if Kapper had failed him and no one waited for them at Pallien?

Then round a bend a light sprang out of the dark, and he descended to the cabin and shook Weber by the shoulder. The tug had shut off half its engine power, and its presence in the night was revealed less by sound than a slight throbbing movement of the air. "Wake up," Chant said, "Pallien." They went up into the wheel-house and tried to distinguish movements on the bank. Nothing visible or audible disclosed the presence of any but themselves, as they drew gently in, riding towards the sandy shallows like a line of ripples. "I told Kapper to be here at one and wait till four," Chant whispered, and then unable to keep his fears any longer to himself, "Suppose Kurtz telegraphed. They may have been arrested." Weber shrugged his shoulders. What use were arguments, fears or doubts? the movement expressed. What would be would be. "There was more chance for us to escape at Cochem," Chant commented, still in a whisper, and as he spoke, a slight movement of the barge made

them stumble. Then even the throbbing was gone from the air. "We are aground," Weber said. "Now all we can do is sit and wait. I have told the tug to tow us off at four."

Chant, with nervous impatience, drew out his cigarette-case, but Weber put a hand on his arm. "No," he said. "No smoking. Some policemen have noses like dogs. We are only fifty yards from the New Bridge. Look." He pointed ahead, and Chant saw a small red light move rapidly across the river at a level a little above their heads and disappear. "A police car," Weber said. "We will see it again in half an hour."

"Can you trust the men on the tug not to strike a match?"

"I have told them. Can one trust anyone? Where, for instance, is Kapper?"

"Can we have beached at the wrong place?"

"No." Weber pointed at the single light above them on an invisible hillside. "There is my house." He leant his chin upon his hands and gazed at it, as though that small, rather dim light gave him, even at a distance, a sense of peace, sanctuary and some deeply hidden satisfaction. "My wife is sitting up," he said.

"She is a good woman. There is someone we can trust." He gazed fixedly through what seemed to both of them a vast space of dangerous dark in which they listened vainly for any sound of their friends. "She will have hot drinks ready," Weber said, "and a good fire. I have never known a man or a woman who could build as good a fire."

"Listen," Chant said. His eyes, growing used to the limitations of the dark, were now able to pick out a few black shapes of cottages above a blacker ridge. "I thought I heard someone stumble."

"We should hear several, not one," Weber whispered. Chant heard him pull something from his pocket, and the click of a safety catch pushed back. Suddenly out of the night came a roar, a scurry of sparks, and the dark ridge shone out distinctly for a moment beneath a chain of lights, leaving the eyes from that brief illumination blinder than before. But Chant had seen more than the express. He had seen half a dozen men pressing themselves back out of sight against the embankment.

"It's all right," Chant said. "They are here."

A footstep sounded again, metallic upon shingle, then soft, like muffled oars, upon the sand. A cautious voice came up to them, asking who they were.

"Is that you, Kapper?" Chant whispered, and after a slight splashing in the water, the Jew scrambled on board.

"We could not get to you before," he said in a hurried whisper. "The police have been active. Did you see their car?" And then, his voice breaking a little above a whisper, "It's all to do with that cursed policeman we shot. We should have waited till things quieted down."

"Too late now," Weber said. "Are your men here? We must unload at once."

"Listen." The Jew bent his head closer towards them. In the dark features were indistinguishable. Even voices were faint enough to lose half of their familiar accents. "We want a man posted on the upper road. Otherwise we will have the police on us before we know."

"I will do that," Chant said. "I should be no use as a carrier."

"I will show you where to stand," the Jew

whispered. "Then I will be back, Weber."

The splash of their feet in the shallow water, before they reached the reassuring silence of the sand, was startling in the still, apparently deserted night. Chant could no longer see the figures crouching under the embankment, though as they reached the ridge and passed through the low tunnel beneath the railway, he thought that he could hear the rapid breathing of several men.

At Pallien two roads ran parallel, north and south, at a different level. One road, which crossed the village, close beside the railway embankment, passed beneath the last buttress of the New Bridge joining Pallien and Trier. The bridge emerged into the second road, which ran in a similar direction, fifty yards higher up the steep hill above the river. On the lower road a man, Kapper said, had already been posted.

Kapper led Chant to a point on the upper road midway between the first houses and the end of the New Bridge. He was sheltered from the direct flash of head-lamps by a tree which grew out of the red sloping soil.

"We shall need an hour to hide the arms,"

Kapper said. "You must stay here all that time."

"You won't take an hour," Chant said. "We've brought less than half of what we wanted."

"Less than half?" the Jew repeated, with a complete incredulity. "What use——" His upbraidings were interrupted by the low birr of a car. Both men stepped back into the shelter of the branches and watched with apprehension the red spark of a distant light grow to a devastating flame, which lit the puddles in the road like smouldering oil. The car turned away from them and disappeared across the bridge into Trier.

"That's the police car again," Kapper said. "Twice in a quarter of an hour. Why should they have halved the beats to-night of all nights? I can't wait here. God knows what these fools on the bank may do. They are quite capable of lighting cigarettes." He would have gone if Chant had not caught his arm. "What am I to do?" he asked in an angry whisper. "I can't hold up a police car."

"You must," Kapper said. "Have you a revolver?"

"I've five hundred in the barge," Chant laughed nervously, silence and night and loneliness and danger closing round his spirit.

"Here, take mine," Kapper said. "If a police car comes, shoot and then climb the hill. There are pine woods at the top. If the police follow you, we may have time to stow the arms away and hide. If they don't, you at least will be safe."

The next moment Chant was alone, and with the cautious footsteps of the Jew diminishing and growing at last indistinguishable, silence came back and gathered round him like a company of spirits, each a separate and individual menace. For silence was sound; sound of his own heart beating, of the unpurposed fall of a pebble of earth from the hillside, of the soft lapping of a bat's wings, of two leaves scraping together in the wind, before they fell with a mouse-like rustle to the feet. The mind leapt, and the heart jumped, from sound to sound, until Chant was ready to curse the incessant noise of silence and long for the roar of traffic, when the ears could rest and not work continuously distinguishing each separate movement of the air.

Surely, he soon began to think, an hour must have passed, and they have forgotten me, or Kapper, through malice, has left me stranded here. Then the police car returned across the bridge, and he realised that less than a quarter of his watch had passed. What shall I do, he wondered, if at the bridge end it turns to the right to Pallien? It seemed a wild, hopeless, rather useless act to shoot and run. But he was saved from a decision, when the car turned again to the left and hummed away in the direction of the Roman Bridge.

The moment of suspense had wearied him, and he sat back against the hillside, but he was not tempted to sleep. Perhaps he was too tired for that. Twice the police car passed, forcing him to his feet, with revolver cocked, and twice he was able to sink back again into the hardly less restless vigil of listening to small sounds. From the direction of the bank and the lower road he could hear nothing. Once, to avert a growing sense of loneliness, he moved across the road and peered downwards in the direction of the river in the hope of distinguishing a rash light, or only a deeper shading of the darkness where the tug lay, but he could see nothing.

Even the lamp in Weber's home was now turned from him, and he would have been unaware if it had been extinguished. Somewhere below him, on the lower road, he supposed that another man was watching, like himself. He longed to be in communication with him, if by no more than the shared sound of breathing. Perhaps he was gone. Perhaps they were all gone. Men, arms, tug, barge, all in safety, and he stranded till the daylight. Kapper had left him in haste with no proper instructions. He had said that they would take an hour to hide the arms in Weber's house. Perhaps that hour had passed and he was free to go. Perhaps Kapper imagined that he had gone. Then Chant remembered that the police car passed every quarter of an hour and he had heard it three times only. Once more. Surely it was almost due.

Had the longing affected his ears, he wondered, leaning forward, or was it really a car that he heard? In another moment he knew that he was not mistaken, but this time it was not a leisurely humming, but the high tearing throb of a car leaping through the night, with no reserve of speed. Far down the road,

beyond the bridge end, a light came into view. It grew with the speed of a falling star, so rapidly that it left a trail of light continuously behind it. They'll smash themselves when they swerve at the bridge, Chant thought, and then a second later it occurred to him: This time they are not going to turn. They are coming to Pallien. Such speed could mean only one thing. A warning had reached the police from Cochem. What shall I do? What shall I do? He fingered the revolver with a feeling of complete hopelessness. Never in his life had he had occasion to use one. I cannot even shoot straight. Over now the dreams of a romantic revolution, of winning Anne-Marie Demassener in the old way, without cunning, intrigue, all the new world's lies and clear self-knowledge of lust. The bridge-head swept into light and back into darkness and the car came on. Chant flung the revolver across the road and heard it falling down the opposite slope. I won't live. I don't want to live, let them shoot. The road was bright as a lit stage, and the trees stood up like cardboard properties. Into that pool of transitory light, which had breached the darkness for less long than the

vision and hope of a perfect beauty had broken his own dim consciousness, Chant flung himself with arms held out to clasp death and have done.

It was as though someone had waved a bright lamp in his face and then flung it in an awkward, heavy, swerving flight into the bushes at the side of the road, but the mere smashing of a lamp could not account for the grinding of brakes and the crash of broken glass. Chant raised his eyes with the sense that even the mercy of death had been withdrawn from him. The car, avoiding him by a few feet, had swerved across the road and would have fallen fifty feet on to the lower road if it had not struck a tree. The light had left him and he stood in the dark waiting for the police officer to appear. One head-lamp had gone out, the other sent a thin ray into the chasm from between twigs which turned a pale yellow in its light.

Only after a perceptible moment did the thought of escape come to Chant. Even then he did not run, but turning his back on the car, began to walk down the road towards Pallien. Silence came up on him from behind—it was his only pursuer—and fell across his shoulders like a heavy and peculiar burden. His steps

faltered. "Have I been responsible for another death?" wondered, with a sense of shame, the organiser of revolution. But there was a difference, he protested to his own self mocker and self critic, between death in fight and these slow, unintended dribblets of decease.

He stopped and turned. I will go back. But his return was as indecisive as his retreat. He did not know what he would find. The man may be bleeding to death. He may be terribly injured. What could he, Oliver Chant, do in such a case? He, who could never even wring the neck of a dying rabbit? The car lay in an ominous silence that was the shadow of its shadow. No one sat on the back seats, and from where he stood Chant could not see the driver. Balanced on the edge of the road he pulled open the door and half expected a body to fall to the ground. But certainly he did not expect to see Anne-Marie Demassener upright in the driver's seat, her hands still on the wheel. She did not turn her face to look at him nor so much as move her eyes, and he caught his breath in the fear that she was dead.

"Anne-Marie," he whispered into a night more lonely than it had been during his solitary

watch, "Anne-Marie." He addressed her as one may address the dead—without formality.

"Why did the damned car not go over the edge?" someone asked in a kind of shrivelled grief. Chant had been so prepared for death that he glanced over his shoulder to see what stranger had spoken.

"Answer me that if you can," commanded Anne-Marie Demassener.

Chant's eyes came back to her, and he began a speechless thanks to any divinity who might have chosen to bend an ear to that cold, comfortless and solitary spot.

"Are you dumb as well as blind?" she said without anger, turning on him a white face. But her face, as he told himself, was always whiter than any other woman's, a white mask which she wore with pride and scorn in the world's eye. And did she take it off for Demassener?

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

"I have not even cut my finger," she said, with astonishment at the treatment which she had received, but not with any form of thankfulness. "But I was nearly killed."

"My fault," Chant said, conscious of the

inadequacy of any apology.

"No, not your fault," she said. "It's this car, this damned car. I ask you—to have got so far towards a solution and then to have stuck against a tree. An insignificant tree," she added, as though a tree which foiled her purpose should have been at least an oak.

"I don't understand."

"No, I suppose you don't. You are very young." Behind her head Chant saw the light of a distant car. It hung for a moment below her ear like a ruby. He put his hand through the door and turned the headlight out. The act was a sacrifice to his cause, for now he could not see her face.

"Why did you do that?" she asked in the dark.

"It's no use wasting your battery. It has to take you back to Trier if the car will move."

"Listen. There's another car. It must be one of the police patrols. We might ask for help."

"It will be turning across the New Bridge," Chant said, listening with apprehension for the sound to recede.

"If I turn on the headlight it will see us."

Chant was uncertain whether he imagined a hint of mockery. He heard her fingers feeling for the switch. There was a click as she tried the smashed lamp. Then her fingers crept along the board. The noise of the police car was loud and clear in their ears.

"Take away your hand," she said sharply. When he disobeyed she did not struggle to disentangle herself, but leant back in the seat. The hum of the engine grew less and less distinct as the car disappeared across the bridge into Trier. When the sound was no longer audible Chant loosened his grasp.

"What are you doing here?" she said.

"What are you?" he asked.

"I am the wife of the Dictator," she said, with an unconvincing pride, which was very transitory. "I wish you had some brandy," she said. "This is the second time you've seen me in a smashed car." She laughed. "You had brandy last time."

"I am sorry," Chant said, looking round him in bewilderment. Weber's home was somewhere in the dark, but he could not take her there. The remembrance of the work, which must now be drawing to an end, disturbed him.

He did not wish Anne-Marie Demassener to be seen by Kapper. The man's nerves were strained, he knew. He might do anything, and nothing which he might do could be foreseen or guarded against. Behind the lacquer surface of his eyes a host of images could play their individual and dangerous games unspied upon.

"Isn't there a gasthaus," he said, "somewhere up the hill? We could knock them up." He stared into the dark, hoping in vain to see her face. He wondered whether he ought not to suggest a return to Trier. What had brought her out driving furiously in the early morning?

"Were you on your way somewhere?" he asked.

"Nowhere," said a dry voice at his elbow. Something in the inflection woke an echo of that "Nowhere" in his brain and sent the word reeling from wall to wall of his skull, a final and mournful negation of any purpose.

He leant forward in the darkness trying to see her face. "You haven't asked me again," he said, "what I am doing here?"

"I'm not a spy," she said. Her fingers found the switch unhindered, and again the single headlamp cracked the dark and cast back from

its bent and partly shattered reflection enough light for them to see each other by. She bent forward and gazed at the wheels as they had mounted the bank. "Another couple of feet," she said, with curiosity, "and I should have been dead."

"And I," Chant said. He added with a kind of fury, "Do you think that I could have lived after killing you?"

She smiled at him without mirth. "Of course you would have lived. None of us have an integrity like that. Oh," she cried, with the merest echo of a controlled hysteria, "what's the use of talking, talking, talking in the cold? Look out for yourself. I'm going to start the car." But the car would not start. It defeated both their efforts, and left them as before talking in the cold.

"There's nothing to do but walk," Chant said. "It's not much more than a mile."

"I've never walked so far," said Anne-Marie Demassener, "not since I married. Unless perhaps in my room." Green eyes fretted with gold gazing from a white face disturbed Oliver Chant. "I'm a bad sleeper," she said, and by that touch on the fringe of her mystery seemed

to admit him to an intimacy which was a little connected, however hard he strove to shut out the vision, with yellow fingers making images in the air. She put her feet to the ground and staggered at the contact with earth. Leaning against the bonnet of the car she said: "I suppose I was a little frightened."

Chant's lips were dry, and he pretended to himself that it was the cold air. "You can't walk straight back to Trier after that shock," he said. "It's only two hundred yards up the hill to the gasthaus. I will knock them up and make them give you something to drink. Some hot brandy." The words came clumsily and with difficulty.

Anne-Marie Demassener said, with a calm assurance which he envied: "Do you mind if I take your arm? The road is rough." Chant switched off the headlamp, and they were again in darkness. He felt her hand on his arm. "Someone is coming up the road from Pallien," she said.

All her sensibilities, Chant told himself, were finer than his. He had heard nothing. It needed her finer ears to distinguish the cautious fall of rubber shoes on the dust of the road.

Even her hand showed a trembling sensitiveness to the touch. He had not the pride to connect the tremulous fingers with himself. They would have shown, he was certain, the same exquisite awareness to silk, to a stone, to a feather gathered from the grass.

"Stay here," he said. He was anxious that she should not see Kapper, more for her own sake than for the Jew's. Moving a little way down the road he called softly: "Is that you?" He had heard nothing of the Jew's approach, and was startled at the striking of a match a few feet in front of him. The flame spurted in the cold as though touched by a wet finger and went out. "What are you doing?" Kapper whispered. "Who have you got there?" He forgot his questions as soon as they had been uttered, and added with as much triumph as could be contained in a hushed voice: "The arms are safe. Directly the next police car has passed we will have the barge away."

"Thank Weber for me," Chant said. "He has done splendidly."

"But you are coming to his house?" Kapper asked. Suspicion returned, and avoiding Chant he ran up the road. The ermine collar of

Anne-Marie Demassener's fur coat glimmered through the dark, and Kapper came abruptly to a standstill. "I am sorry," he said, with an exaggerated humility, "I did not know that you were entertaining a woman."

"Aren't you curious?"—Anne-Marie Demassener spoke like a spirit without body through the dark—"as to what woman he is entertaining? What she is like? Shall I show a light?"

"No need," the Jew said, but no haste in his speech revealed his fear of being identified. "I suppose you have arms, legs, breasts, thighs. I could describe you without a light."

"Unless you go," Chant began to threaten, when the voice of Anne-Marie Demassener interrupted him. "Be quiet, I want to listen to your friend. I think I have heard his voice before. I like the voice." She added thoughtfully: "I like a man who is proud and unhappy. Dark, musical, liking women. I think I could describe you without a light. But aren't you curious about my name? Shall I show a light?"

"No," Kapper said. "I'm not interested in your name. I seem to know your voice, but then I know the voice of every trollop in Trier. I don't need to know their names."

"But I should like to know your name, to remember where it was we met before."

"I am a man and you are a woman," Kapper said, with a sombreness which might only have been the effect of a long night of strain. "We all meet in the same place sooner or later."

"One would think that you were a poet," she said with amazement. And with contempt at the valueless repetitions of poets and the way their minds run on well-worn paths, she said, "I suppose you mean in the grave."

"No, no," Kapper said. "I mean between the sheets."

The words flung out at the nameless woman with contempt and triviality were the last he spoke. They could not see him go, but they heard his departing stride in the dark. "And to think," Anne-Marie Demassener laughed, "that he believes I do not know him."

"Perhaps that's lucky for you," Chant said.

"He could not be dangerous to me," she affirmed. "But I like your Kapper. His frankness interests me. I believe it even excites me a little," she added, with wonder.

They moved together up the hill, and occasionally when one stumbled on a stone, their

knees touched, unintentionally, and yet with something of the transciency and furtiveness of a deliberate caress.

"You will laugh at me," Chant said slowly and defensively, "but I longed to hit that man."

"Herr Kapper? But I tell you he interested me. I am not posing." She added, with something approaching humility: "I suppose we have different standards." The spoken suggestion of a difference, although in all his thoughts he was aware of its immensity, angered Chant. His arm withdrew a little under her touch and he remained silent. "I suppose," she said—and if he had not resented her indifference to insult and to a staining contact, he would have wondered at the trouble which she took to approach him—"you are one of those who believe that a thing must be right or wrong." Her words were not, as she spoke them, an accusation of crudity: they were only the simple admission of that difference between them; yet they angered him still more.

"Oh, I know," he said, stumbling a little at the steepness of the hill and feeling her fingers stiffen in his support, "that's not the modern

way. We must all analyse now, until there's no white or black, but only a dingy mean. I'm old-fashioned, I admit." He added, with a hauteur which was meant for pride: "There's more glory there."

"I admit the mean," she said, "the dinginess. But it's the truth. We can't escape from it. You see, even the car stuck against a tree. Don't think," she continued, "I haven't tried for a solution."

"If only I could make you happy," he said impulsively, but his words, unable in the darkness to light any expression in another's face, came depressingly back to him unanswered and a little burlesqued. If they had any result it was only to make her say with a return to a natural impersonality, "I think there should be a path up there on the right. Can you see any light?"

From where he stood he could see none, but when he bent his head to try to distinguish a break in the bank, a glimmer, which must have been obscured by leaves, swam up to him. "Yes," he said. "There are trees in front." The gasthaus, as he was to discover in daylight, was not more than sixty yards away, but ten

minutes passed before, out of breath, they stood on the stone doorstep and heard a small hollow bell announcing their presence with what seemed to them an unnecessary disturbance of the quiet.

Anne-Marie Demassener laughed excitedly. "What they will think," she ejaculated, eyeing Oliver Chant with amusement.

"Of course, I will explain to them," he said. "Your car has broken down. We want a hot drink and a car back to the palace."

"Need you mention the palace?" she asked wearily. "At three o'clock in the morning one is a little tired of unpopularity. Let them think what they will. It doesn't matter to us."

He had no time to answer. There was a shuffle of slippered feet, the rattle of a key, and the door opened. A tousled female head of an indeterminate age gazed at them with a suspicion which melted inexplicably into amiability. An "Ah" full of meaning was breathed at them, as a cloud of vapour through the cold air. Chant explained, in inadequate German, some of the circumstances: a smashed car, the cold and shock, the necessity of returning to Trier. The whole of a female figure now appeared trustingly from behind the

door clad in a nightdress, which emphasised rather than obscured two enormous breasts. Chant apologised for the lateness of the hour, but his apologies were waved aside. Certainly they should have a hot drink. Custom was not so good these days that one minded being disturbed. But she would advise them to stay the night, for it was after curfew at Trier, and the police would arrest them if they were without a pass. "I have a good bed," she added, eyeing them with maternal solicitude.

"A drink," Chant said impatiently, "is what we want."

The woman looked at him with disapproval. In her youth, she seemed to express, young men were young men, romantic, impetuous. Thinking of the old times she raised her hand with coquetry towards an untidy mass of hennaed hair. "There are hot pipes in the private rooms," she said, "but you will find the restaurant cold." She opened a door and stood on one side for them to pass. At the sight of a long bare room like a dance hall, with continuous windows on the side facing the Moselle, and chairs and tables piled on top of each other along the walls, Anne-Marie

Demassener gathered her fur coat round her with a shiver of discontent. Behind her Oliver Chant could not help watching with fascination the lines of her body which the gesture moulded. Turning he saw something of the same reflection in the eyes of the woman. "We can't stay here," said Anne-Marie Demassener to him in English. "I'd rather be disreputable than cold," and to the woman, with an air of casual disdain which repelled any intimate breathings, "You can bring us the drinks to a private room."

The private room was furnished with a table, two uncomfortable chairs, and a wide cushioned couch, which was clearly only the daylight disguise of a bed. Over it hung a picture of a lady in a long white frock and frills of lace playing with two cultured blonde children in velvet suits. The woman explained that it was a poor room, but only a few were heated out of the season. With a glance at Anne-Marie Demassener's wedding ring she protested that if the *gnädige Frau* was dissatisfied, she would have a fire lit in a larger room.

"All we want is a hot drink," Chant said, with an embarrassed impatience. "We are not

staying for the rest of the night." The woman, however, lingered. Her visitors were newly married? she inquired, instilling into her voice a solicitude with which to ward off the danger of a rebuff but failing to disguise a certain sensual questioning in her expression.

"Your visitors," said Anne-Marie Demassener ruthlessly, "are cold and thirsty."

Of course, the woman apologised, she was a stupid old gossip. Naturally they wished to have their drink and to be left alone. Again the hand patted the hennaed hair, while the massive breasts under the thin nightgown seemed to throb in sympathy with two impatient lovers. She closed the door behind her softly, and left a conscious silence in the room. Anne-Marie Demassener and Oliver Chant sat opposite each other on the hard chairs, their awareness of the couch thrusting itself between them like the nagging of a voluble acquaintance. Demassener's wife began to beat a tune upon the table with long wakeful fingers. The room was little warmer than the restaurant, but she threw her coat back from her shoulders. With every moment that passed the silence became more formidable and more impossible to

break by anything save a violent action. When the woman returned with two steaming glasses she seemed to judge the situation with an appalling accuracy. The chairs were uncomfortable, she said. Would not the *gnädige Frau* prefer to sit on the couch? She would bring the table up to it. Anne-Marie Demassener acquiesced in an astonishing silence and let herself fall back with some weariness upon the cushions. The woman watched her legs as they revealed themselves to the knees with the solicitude of one who was accustomed to encourage the shy passion of the newly married.

When the woman had gone, Chant broke the silence with a desperate banality. "Is the brandy hot enough for you?" he asked.

"Yes, and yours?" She did not put it to her lips, even to give the answer and the question the semblance of naturalness.

"You must have found it cold motoring?"

"Yes. You must have found it cold walking?"

"A little. What sort of a place is this in the summer?"

"I believe foreigners like it." Anne-Marie Demassener brought the brandy half-way to her

lips, then with an impatient movement returned the glass to the table. The brandy spilt over the edge. She rose, and without looking at Chant moved to the curtained window and stared blankly into the dark blue velvet folds. I must talk, talk, talk, Chant told himself, or how can I avoid taking her in my arms? The curve of her body outlined by the coat brought back to his mind plump yellow fingers gesticulating in the air, Mr. Crane speaking with drunken sibilants, "I wouldn't mind changing places with Demassener." A shadow on the wall, his lips to the stone, and a grief which he could not understand. That was love, not lust, and which was this, this passion to possess and this longing to refrain? Black or white or only a dingy mean? Talk, talk, talk, brain and conscience all implored him.

"I am a foreigner," he said.

"And I, too," commented Anne-Marie Demassener, with turned back and one finger touching with speculation the heavy velvet folds. The suggestion of a link between them frightened him and drove him to his feet.

"Shall I go," he asked, "and see if I can get you a car?" His voice sounded to himself dry,

desperate and unconvincing.

Anne-Marie Demassener turned impulsively from the window and spread out her hands with a gesture of vacancy. "If you want to go," she said, with an undisguised contempt, "you can go."

"I don't want to go," Chant said. His heart beat heavily and he was sick with a desire to end all sham and concealment. "Haven't I told you already," he whispered, with an unexpected quietness, "how I love you?"

"Then love me," she said, with hands still outspread in a gesture which had become now an abnegation of the rights over her own body.

He came to her and took her almost tentatively in his arms. "Do you really love me?" he asked incredulously.

"I want you," she said, and to his desire the two expressions were the same.

Pressing her close to him he yet found time for an uneasy ejaculation. "Demassener," he said, and was not even aware that he spoke aloud.

"Are you afraid of him?" she asked, moving a little from his embrace.

"He's my enemy," Chant said, and added

with a grudging passion that had nothing to do with sex, "I can't help admiring the man."

She pushed him away and said, with anger: "How do you know that he's a man?"

"He has courage," Chant said, feeling the incongruity of a fate which drove him to praise his enemy and his rival.

"And haven't women courage? Haven't I courage?" She added in a low furious voice: "Courage isn't the perquisite of men. There's only one mark of a man."

"Do you mean——" Chant broke off with amazement.

"If a ceremony can make him my husband," she said to the curtains, gathering the folds into a nervously clutching hand, "then I suppose," she said, with something of pain, contempt and of despair, "I've been his wife for the last five years."

"Has he never . . . ?"

"Never. All that disgusts him."

"But he loves you. Surely he loves you?" He had found the solution, but it was not clear to him. Faced with the body which he so desired, he could not understand the other's spirit.

"What use is that sort of love to me? I am not old and tired. I was another man's mistress before I was his wife. And yet I've been faithful to him, faithful to nothing, for five years. I can't stand it any longer. You can have me if you want me. He doesn't want me."

Not in that way had Oliver Chant longed for them to meet. He had dreamed of her opening her arms to him, but not as she did now, as a gesture illustrating her sad resignation to hunger.

When he made no movement towards her she said without anger, with a melancholy consciousness of fate: "Don't you want me?"

Chant stared at the floor and wondered where desire had gone and why it had left him. "I love you," he said, with perplexity and without passion.

She seemed suddenly to remember, out of that dark forest of explanation in which they evaded each other, that she was Anne-Marie Demassener, the wife of the Dictator of Trier, and that she was too beautiful for pity or for excuses. Her hands fell from the curtains. "You may fetch a car for me," she said.

So she was going for ever, he thought, raising

dazed eyes to her white, contemptuous face. Dark velvet curtains, a couch in a private room, an invitation to passion which had become lost in a maze of excuses, a mystery solved in a mean modern way. That was the end of what had begun in the dark, mouth to mouth. He put his hand to his head. "I love you." What was the use of the statement when she was going from him for ever? Flake by flake the magnolia shed its petals between them, and she was receding behind the drift, which thickened and increased blown by a hollow wind. "No, no," he said, "no. I won't let you go."

He shut his eyes because in the dark all questionings lapsed to silence, all perplexing visions into touch. Moving towards her blindly in his self-made night, he said: "I'm not Demassener. I want you." When he spoke the words he did not mean them. They were flung out of his heart in insincerity because he could not bear to abandon his hopes suddenly, without forewarning. But when his hands, thrusting beneath her coat, felt her body, deceit was shrivelled up like a husk touched by flame. "I'm not Demassener," he repeated, with exultation.

"Turn out the light," she said. He heard her coat fall to the floor, and when he turned to her again, the first frail silver of day exposed her body to his curiosity and his desire.

PART III

CHAPTER X

WHEN Chant woke for the second time Anne-Marie Demassener had gone. Sunlight came in at the window, touched the glasses of brandy, the untidy cushions of the couch, his clothes in a heap upon the floor. With uneasiness he could not but recognise how beauty had left the room, which remained as squalid as a harlot's lodging.

Socks, braces, buttons, studs, a tie which dangled across the back of a chair.

Chant closed his eyes, and turning to the wall tried to pretend that the touch of cushions was the touch of the body of Anne-Marie Demassener. His arm was still cramped with the weight of her head, and he clung to that physical reminder of the night. "I have had her. She is mine," he thought, without conviction. She had given herself with pride and had withdrawn again with pride. It was as though only the sheath of her spirit had been touched a little by excitement.

But when he was free of the room and its

degrading furniture and of the woman with hennaed hair and curious gaze, exultation returned. "I have had what Demassener never had," he told himself, and pitied that proud, lonely and incorruptible figure. He was to see Anne-Marie again that evening. So much he had made her promise. She would join him at eight in the Church of Our Lady; it was the only place they could find with some resemblance to loneliness. I will make her marry me, he thought, leaving the gasthaus behind him and mounting a steep path among the pines. Body and heart were satisfied, and only something in the restless mind wondered how Anne-Marie Demassener could adapt herself to so vacant a life as the one which he led in England. But after all why should I return? he abjured uneasiness. If we are successful to-morrow, why should I not stay in Trier?

Gold light fell between the pines. The air was cold, and the Moselle below sparkled like a pathway of frost. A cluster of houses was Pallien, and Pallien was Weber and slippers warmed beside the fire and a wife who was a good Catholic and could be trusted. He wondered which was Weber's house. Kapper

would be gone now across the river and Weber would be close to Coblenz and the woman would be alone in the house with five hundred revolvers, five machine-guns and much ammunition, a strange cellar for a good, comfortable woman to manage. He would have liked to make her acquaintance; he would have liked, indeed, with the night in memory, to acquaint himself with any woman who was a faithful wife, faithful not with the body only, but with a spirit which kept alive after many years a certain tenderness, even perhaps a certain passion. He wondered whether Frau Weber, that good wife and good Catholic, could reassure him that it was not a futile dream to expect a lifetime of Anne-Marie Demassener. "How," he cried aloud, as though Frau Weber might hear him down in Pallien, "how can I keep her content with me, when all the world is not good enough for her?" The sleepy satisfaction of his body woke in him a painful gratitude. If only I could do something for her. Perhaps to free her from Demassener would be something.

A light cold touch upon his cheek woke him to the fact of snow—snow falling in long lines

like rain through the sunlight and between the pines. It touched the spring with the mystery and long memory of age. A tug moved slowly up the Moselle; the smoke from its funnel, which had been white a minute before, turned grey against the immaculate flakes. As though white fingers had been raised across the world to hush unnecessary sound, a silence fell in which even the downfall of snow was audible as a whispering upon the ground and between the needles. Chant could hear the grind of a cart's wheels and the pad of horse's feet from the New Bridge many hundred feet below him and half a mile away. Peering with difficulty through the shifting folds of the intricate screen Chant made out a painted caravan and two ribboned horses passing over the river to Trier. For a moment he was unaware of their significance. Demassener's wife had been temporarily lost in his companion of the night. A grind of wheels and a pad of feet. Another caravan came into sight on the bridge. He remembered then that this was the eve of the public holiday, the eve of Anne-Marie's birthday. They would be putting up the booths in the market place. He could fix its position in the town spread out

below him by the two great bastions of the cathedral. Next to the cathedral lay the Liebfrauenkirche, where in a few hours' time he would see her. He wondered whether it would be safe to warn her to remain indoors on her birthday.

Chant had eaten no breakfast and was becoming conscious of hunger. He would not go back to the gasthaus and the solicitous manageress. Beauty had gone from there, and it was the uglier for having once incongruously contained such rapture. Nor did he yet wish to cross the river to Trier. In Trier he was to see Anne-Marie Demassener and persuade her to marry him. That beauty must join with the other beauty. There must be no breach between, and to encounter Joseph Kapper and his questions and his sensual certainty would be an ugly breach. He wanted, yes, more than food, the sight of a "good wife and good Catholic." That would be both a prelude and a prophecy. Chant knew that his action was rash and might endanger others, besides himself, but he went down to Pallien through the hush of the snow, and after inquiries knocked at Frau Weber's door.

It was opened at once, as though in that home where arms for five hundred men lay hidden, there was no need for any caution or concealment. Chant found himself faced by the "good Catholic," a stout, middle-aged woman with calm, inquiring eyes.

"Are you Frau Weber?" he asked, with some astonishment, having expected a sense of strain, at the best an indication of a night without sleep.

"Yes," she said, and waited with the door wide, showing at the other end of a short passage a stone-paved kitchen and a dresser loaded with blue and white china. The sun splashed the floor behind her.

"My name is Chant. Your husband——"

"Will you come in?" she asked, with no surprise, and led him into the kitchen. "It's a cold day," she said. "I have some soup on the stove now. You will have a plate?"

"It is good of you," Chant said.

"You are my husband's friend. We expected you last night." She spoke as though he had missed a dinner or a dance. An explanation of her calmness occurred to him. Weber might not have told her what it was they had brought to the house during the night. "Everything went

off well?" he asked ambiguously.

"The arms are safe in the cellar," she said.

"How can you be so calm?" he asked, with astonishment. "I thought your husband could not have told you."

"He tells me everything," she said, pouring soup into a plate and carrying it to the table.

"And aren't you afraid?"

Frau Weber glanced at a clock on the mantelpiece. "He should be nearly at Coblenz by now," she said. "No one can touch him there."

"But aren't you afraid for yourself?"

"He would not have left me," Frau Weber said, busying herself about her stove, "if there had been any danger. He is a good husband." She spoke with a certainty which could never have been troubled by needs, questionings, doubts, analysis.

That, thought Chant, with some bitterness, was a haven to which neither he nor Anne-Marie Demassener could ever come. They were born in an age of doubt and to a class which wished to know too much. She would never make "a good wife and a good Catholic" in that calm, tender and unquestioning way, nor he a "good husband." They would speak to each other in

double meanings, guard the heart with evasions, misunderstand the plainest speech, quarrel over clauses. And at the end—if they lived together so long—they would have no expectation but decay, no claim to any sentient eternity, and only a half-hearted hope. The compensation he supposed was rapture. It was difficult to believe that Frau Weber had ever possessed that.

"I suppose you believe that God will guard you," he said suddenly, raising his eyes from his plate, as though it had been a crystal in which he had seen visions.

"Of course," Frau Weber said, "and you, too, Herr Chant."

"So that to-morrow all will be well?"

"Yes. All will be well."

"But will God not guard Demassener?"

"He is not a good Catholic." She sat down at the table and cut herself a piece of bread.

"Have you done nothing wrong, Frau Weber?" She showed not the least surprise at his words. Why should she? She asked herself the same question every night before lapsing into unexcited sleep. "Of course. But I have been forgiven."

"You are certain of even that?"

She smiled at him. "You are not a Catholic, Herr Chant. I can see that."

Outside the snow no longer fell. The film over the streets was already muddied by many feet, churned up by wheels. What had been a visible and tangible silence was now moulded and flung hither and thither by children, shrilly calling, their voices long dripping icicles of sound. There was no excuse for lingering here in a warm room with certainty, when across the river questions had to be asked and answered and, one supposed, death prepared. But how he longed to stay. Surely from this room, from Frau Weber's candid and unmysterious gaze, even from the ticking of the clock, he could gain some assurance, more steady than a rapture in the past, with which to face the future. The future was Anne-Marie Demassener, whom he was to marry. He did not want a mistress, he wanted a wife. He had no doubts there, what he doubted was his ability to make her happy. She had been happy in the night, but tenderness was needed as well as passion, and he was afraid of his own nature. He would be tired at times and then he would question even the plainest words. There never would be an hour when he

would be satisfied to leave a mystery unprobed. And would she have the tenderness to forgive?

"You are looking tired, Herr Chant," Frau Weber was saying. "Won't you lie down for a little before you go back to Trier?"

He did not hear her. He was addressing Anne-Marie Demassener in the violent and despairing fashion with which men make impossible vows. I love you, he was saying. I swear to you that I will never question what you do. I will never ask what you mean. I will never try to know you more than you want to be known. I love you as men have loved God. He meant that he would never try to bring a light into the mystery of who and what she was, and he forgot that men have always tried to solve the mystery of God, whether by mathematics or by prayers, by astronomy or by fastings.

Frau Weber said again: "Won't you lie down, Herr Chant?"

"No, a bed wouldn't rest me," he said, "I shouldn't sleep."

"You ought not to worry so much," she said. "If we are doing what God means us to do, everything will be all right."

"But if He doesn't?"

She laughed at him. "Then it will be just as well if we fail."

Chant stood up. "Thank you for your soup and your encouragement, Frau Weber," he said. "I must be off." He laughed a little hysterically as he held out his hand. "How funny to think that we may be prevented from meeting again by death or imprisonment . . ."

"More likely, Herr Chant, that you will just forget me."

She had spoken with amusement, but with some truth, for he had already, when fifty yards from her house, for the time being forgotten her. He was absorbed by the implications of the just realised fact—that everything which he did now was done, perhaps, for the last time. On the New Bridge, in an attempt to rebut that uncomfortable idea, he stared down twice into the Moselle. But this was only to delay the final act. Stare six times if he would, the last would still contain possible finality. Through all the blank hours which lay between him and his meeting with Anne-Marie Demassener, hours which separated from the lover the tourist who stared into a shop window, the conspirator who at his gasthaus packed a bag

and burnt some papers, he was haunted by the remembrance which had come to him so casually at Frau Weber's. But its implications were soon summed up in a single fear, the fear that his meeting with Anne-Marie Demassener that night might be his last. What did they matter now, his apprehensions that he might be unable to make her happy for a lifetime, when he might not be allowed to make her happy for an hour?

When Chant left the gasthaus the snow on the pavements was turning to mud under deliberate drops of rain. In the market place men were putting up stalls in preparation for the next day's fair. Premature bunting hung from a window of the Red House and its dye dripped and stained the ground. The skeleton of a roundabout, the cars stacked under a tarpaulin, stood between the fountain and the ancient cross. A knot of children waited in the hope that the proprietor might allow it to wheeze out a single tune. For a few minutes Chant gazed at the wooden frames, through which men and children picked their ruminative ways beneath the rain. He was touched a little by remorse for these preparers of an event already condemned. The booth for sweets and

the booth for toys, the brightly painted chariots of the roundabout, had all been assigned a fate of which their owners were ignorant. They would rub their frameworks together in the same barricade, and be smashed into the same useless pile of lumber by the same bullets.

The lights were very dim in the Church of Our Lady. Slender pillars disappeared in the shadows below the roof to reappear again as they drooped to meet a new pillar across the aisle with the grace of a stem bent by the weight of a flower. The white feet and face of a gigantic hanging Christ glimmered through the dark from an invisible cross. It had none of the effect of a pitying God. It seemed to Chant, a little bowed beneath the weight of a darkness unbroken save for the flames of a few candles, to represent the God who, like an eagle, tears the hearts of men with doubt, terror, mystery and what is strangely called divine unrest. Two old women followed the Stations of the Cross, pushing their way slowly from pillar to pillar, against a night which, like a dark spirit, strove to delay their attempts at holiness. But for them and Chant the church was empty, yet if the eyes were allowed to dwell for a time on

a dim corner, the shadows, turning sharp and angular, would transform themselves into a shape, and in that darkness a wooden saint possessed as much life as the praying women.

Chant moved round the church, peering into the shadows for Anne-Marie Demassener, with the caution of a conspirator. Head over his shoulder he would start at plaster shapes, as though they stood there to listen to his thoughts and discover his purpose. We ought not to have met in a church, he thought. It is not a place for lovers. But where else could they have found the darkness in which to hide and the silence in which to be aware of each other's whispering? Click, click, click, and a faint sibilance. That was the only sound, and it was made by the two old women telling their beads. Chant paused before a marble group in front of which two candles guttered to their end. The dead Christ was laid out for burial, the women and the apostles bending their faces over the fallen head. The smoky last flicker of the candles shifted the shadows continually, until the figures seemed in truth to move to their task. Even the dead Christ stirred as if at a prescience of resurrection. Chant picked a fresh candle

from an iron bracket and lit it, so that the faces glowed with light and the limbs were stilled. He knelt and tried to pray, beaten at last by pervading holiness. It was impossible. He had no clear beliefs round which to form his words and he remembered no form of prayer. Thoughts alone shifted through his mind, no requests or invocations or expressions of gratitude. Faced in this place, where God was not a cloudy aspiration but a concrete hope or fear, Chant discovered how closely his own mind had been tethered to abstract words, which had now betrayed him. He had believed in freedom. Freedom tomorrow was to be a struggle between Kapper and Paul Demassener, with death almost certainly for many and the end of it all the defeat of something only partly bad by something only partly good. He had believed in love. Love now was the struggle of two bodies to possess each other. It seemed to Chant that he had been enabled to see the boundaries of the infinite.

"O God, O God," he murmured, not praying to the figure before him, but still conversing with himself, "I wish that I could believe in your infinity." Click, click, click, round the pillars fought the old women. The struggle had lasted

through all their lives, and they did not believe that it would be concluded by their deaths. "They talk of marriage as a sacrament, and I want to marry her. I am here for that. There is something holy in my purpose." It was a plea flung out to a God who might be resentful of his presence. To-morrow, the idea of his purpose set his thoughts wandering again while he knelt, tomorrow everything would be over for good or evil. He hoped that if the dice fell for evil it would be the complete shattering of death and not the mean compromise of flight. How can I fly, he implored the figures busy with laying out the dead, without her? He had obtained only half the arms which he had meant to buy. Would the police shoot? Would the people rise? Respect for Demassener. "Nothing can destroy their respect." Chant was startled by his own unintended laughter in the all but empty church. He knew something which would destroy their respect and he could not use it. "There's only one mark of a man." And even if they knew, he thought, what weight could it hold against Demassener's rectitude and justice, his love for Trier?

He saw in that question which he addressed

to himself kneeling in the church, the distance that he had travelled in a few days. He had come to Trier with the intention of fighting for justice. Now he was fighting for a woman. In the next breath he told himself that Anne-Marie Demassener could not be summed up under the name of "woman." To be fighting for Anne-Marie Demassener instead of for justice was, he protested with heat to a critic speaking from within, a better aim.

"What are you doing? Praying?" asked a voice with incredulity. Chant rose, ashamed of his embarrassment. Even though it was Anne-Marie Demassener who had spoken in tones a little muffled by the high fur collar with which she shielded her face, he said with indignation, "What if I had been?"

"My dear," she said, and to his surprise Chant found that in the dark of the church her voice sounded less lovely than shrill, "don't be angry. I only thought it odd. After all if one must be biblical it should be I who prayed. 'The woman taken in adultery,' you know. Though, of course," her voice rang on, as she stared in curiosity round the church, "I have not yet been 'taken.' That, I suppose, will come

if I repeat the offence. Do you know," she continued, not pausing to allow Chant time to interrupt, "this is the first time that I have been inside this church." She did not trouble to lower her voice, which contained, Chant realized, no recognition of mystery and no trace of tenderness. Click, click, click. The old women were reaching the end of their hard and difficult journey to Calvary. Soon they would be at the foot of the cross, raising eyes with an understanding of pain, tenderness and mystery to the dim sacrifice above.

Yet the thought seemed to Chant a betrayal. If Anne-Marie Demassener did not choose to belong to that world of shade, neither would he. Almost aggressively he raised his voice to companion hers. "I am glad you are here," he said.

"Here," she echoed with an irony which contained memories of "there"—the glasses of brandy, the wide couch and the sedate picture on the wall. "Now that I am here," she said, "what do you want to say to me? It must be important to have brought me through these streets. Did you see them putting up the stalls, the roundabouts, in honour of my birthday to-

morrow?" She laughed with resentment. "I had to keep my face hidden in case they should see me and have the courage to throw stones."

"Let me take you away from here," Chant said.

"To-night? Now? Do you know, I believe that I'd come. All women have reason to hate their birthdays, but not as I do. Are you offering to take me away now, this minute, where?"

"I didn't mean tonight," Chant said. "Tomorrow."

"Oh, I shall not want to come tomorrow. Never mind," Anne-Marie Demassener smiled at him with the nearest approach to tenderness he had ever seen her show, "you will always be able to say that on one occasion, if you had asked her, the wife of the Dictator would have run away with you."

"I'm not joking," Chant said, "I want you to marry me. Your marriage with Demassener can be annulled."

"You mean a ceremony—a service—a 'will you take this man?' " She laughed, not abashed at all by the shadows or effigies of holiness and belief. Again against his will Chant heard a critic within him whisper that there was room

for tenderness and lowered voices. "Yes," he said, "of course that's what I mean."

"Because, you see," Anne-Marie Demassener said slowly, "I will marry you again as I married you last night, but I will not be your wife."

The old women had passed Golgotha and had gone, but Chant was not alone in the church with Anne-Marie Demassener. He could not take her in his arms and by so doing destroy misunderstanding. For he was certain that there was a misunderstanding. She could not mean what she had said. "We ought not to have come here," he said. "This isn't the right place."

An old man and a boy were shuffling down the aisle carrying long candles, which when lit below the hovering God revealed a coffin draped in velvet, that had before been only a part of the shadows. A biretta showed that a priest was dead. There was one, Chant thought with some bitterness, who had died in the possession of a belief. He had lived with it all his life, so that now only the sexton and his son were troubled with the arranging of the ornaments of death. There would be no woman. The

thing which he had loved best he had carried with him.

O God, Chant implored in silence, that is what I want to do. I want to take her with me into death. But there was a difference. His love was too uncertain to be called a belief. Yet like that priest I have no substitute, he thought. The other was the happier man.

"Speak to me," said Anne-Marie Demassener. "One would think you had been robbed. Haven't I just offered myself to you?"

"I asked you to marry me," he said, and seeing another negation on her lips continued with desperation, "I know that you don't love Demassener, and you love me."

"You are too straightforward," she said. "Things don't work like that. They move in circles. I wanted you. I didn't love you. I couldn't live with you."

Chant with his eyes upon the floor said "I think I see. You mean last night wasn't love. It was——"

"Lust," Anne-Marie Demassener supplied the word which his lips boggled at.

In his heart he longed to be able to share the

coffin with the priest. It lay now alone beneath the feet of Christ like a winter field lit by a few stars. But in its barrenness lay the seed of new life. In his own heart which lived and expanded with breath and contracted with pain and despair there seemed no such seed. The man and the boy had gone. They were alone, and he could take her in his arms whenever he chose. She had said as much.

"I don't understand," Chant said. "You said that you were tired of living with him and you wanted me. That's true, isn't it?"

Anne-Marie Demassener, without looking at Chant, with her eyes on the altar and the lamp that burned to show the Body of God was there, said "Yes, I am tired of living with him. But how can I tell how tired I would be of living without him. Body, body, body. I suppose there must be something else, one gets so tired of that."

"You are talking like him now," Chant said with bitterness, as though he saw his enemy's banner hung out on friendly walls. "One can't help talking a little the same," she said, "when one has lived with a man for five years. Even his ideas seem less strange. Why, sometimes

when I look in a glass, I think even my face is becoming a little like his."

"No, never that," Chant said. He moved towards her as though he intended to take her in his arms, but all the darkness of the place came in between. "Listen," he begged her, "if you lived with me for five years mightn't you come to forget him? Last night. . ." He heard the words as an ominous echo of a previous call to remember. It met with very much the same response.

"Last night," she said with no attempt to soften the brutality of the words, "was nothing. Anyone would have satisfied me. I don't know why I had troubled to be faithful so long."

"I was not satisfied."

"Then go," she said with a flare of anger, "and find a trollop. Your friend said that he knew all the whores in Trier."

"I mean that I want you always."

"I prefer," she said, "to stay the wife of the Dictator." The pride she still felt for her husband angered Chant.

"Perhaps he will not be that tomorrow," he said.

Anne-Marie Demassener regarded him with

contempt. It was the end of what he had imagined as a scene of love. "Even though you may be rich," she said, "you can't play about with a state. Do you think if Paul had been merely rich he would have done what he has? Spill your money. All you will do is raise a little trouble and get a policeman murdered." For the first time she lowered her voice in the church, but it was not with tenderness or a recognition of sanctity. "If I thought you were dangerous," she said, "I would have reported you to the police days ago. You would have been shot. I care just that much for your body."

"Anne-Marie," he said with desperation. He had used her name for the first time when he thought her dead. Now, the second time, she was as good as dead, for she was gone. The church was indeed as empty as a lover could desire.

Alone Chant did not try to pray. Before he had difficulty in finding words, now it would have been hard for him to discover a brain with which to seek for them. He followed her from the church, but she was out of sight. In the market place men still wandered through the

skeleton of the morrow's show. Above him one of the Roman bastions of the Cathedral lost itself in night. Through the centuries it had supported the slender Gothic form of the Church of Our Loved Lady. To the innumerable and shifting multitude who had like Chant passed below it in possession of their grief, the Cathedral had offered at least the one consolation, its age. That a man's life was short could not be denied under its shadow.

CHAPTER XI

"A BOTTLE of Moselle," Chant demanded, but the waiter shook his head. "Not here." "I tell you I've had none. I'm not drunk." The waiter smiled. "I can get what I want next door," Chant murmured, and slipped on a step outside the door.

Joseph Kapper watched him scramble to his feet. "Herr Chant?" he said with surprise.

"They wouldn't give me a drink. I'm going next door.

"Don't you think, Herr Chant," Kapper said, "that it would be safer to come home with me?"

"I'm not drunk," Chant said, "I only want to be."

"But why," Kapper protested, "on this night of all nights? To-morrow, yes. We can drink tomorrow."

"Tomorrow," Chant said thickly. "That's off. Not a penny of mine. . ."

"Come home, Herr Chant. You are talking wildly."

"Listen," Chant said, catching the Jew's sleeve. "I swear I've only had a drop. I don't know why I had that. I wanted to kill myself, but then I said, 'No, I'll get drunk.' It's easier, you see, and less final. For Christ's sake, Kapper, let's avoid finality."

"Come home. We can talk better there. No, not that turning. Straight on a little way yet."

"I'm sorry. Yes, of course." Chant laughed. "That's the way to the palace. Do you know Shakespeare, Kapper? He could write as bawdy rhymes as ever you could. Why do you write bawdy rhymes, Kapper?"

The small, polished eyes turned to him. "My life's been that, Herr Chant. Comic and bawdy. One writes out of one's experience. But they are not all bawdy rhymes. Sometimes one remembers or one hopes."

"Let's sit upon the ground and tell bawdy stories of the deaths of kings."

"You seem very happy, Herr Chant. Keep on the pavement. There are too many cars about."

"I'm damned happy because I'm not remembering."

"Remembering what?"

"That's secret. Keep your dirty fingers off that, Jew. I don't mean to be offensive. Do you write when you are drunk? Words, words, words, why they—come. That, I think, expresses it."

"A little further yet. Don't talk so loud. You are attracting attention."

"Kapper, you are my friend. I seem to have known you for years. I'm whispering because I don't want anyone else to hear. Tell me this. Why should a woman lie with a man and then refuse to marry him? I thought it was always the other way round."

"I suppose she prefers someone else, Herr Chant."

The cold wind pecked at his cheek and then was gone. Warmth embraced him. Kapper's voice said:

"Mind your head. Look. Here's a chair. Sit down."

"But why should she prefer him when he's not a man? As good as a eunuch, Kapper, she told me so."

"Position?"

"Yes, that must be it. Not money, Kapper."

I have money. And as for position, he may have none to-morrow."

"What's that, Herr Chant?" The Jew's hands were on his shoulders, shaking him. "Wake up. What do you mean? Who?"

"Demassener, of course," Chant said, discarding his secret as easily as he would his life. The lacquered eyes approached his, points of light gleaming at the pupils. "What do you mean, not a man? Who was the woman who lay with you?"

"Anne-Marie." It was not an answer to the question. It was a sigh of relinquishment. Wine was fulfilling the task required of it in bringing sleep.

"Was that last night?" the Jew asked. "And I told her I knew all the trollops in Trier."

"Write me a filthy poem, Kapper."

"Oh, yes, I'll write you a poem," the Jew said. "Such a poem, Herr Chant." But the promise was addressed to a sleeping man.

Wine had done this much. It could not do more and bring rest. Sleep was shot with images rather than dreams. A face gazing at him from a mirror, a white shower of petals that turned to scraps of paper. Anne-Marie De-

massener offering herself to a French soldier. Mrs. Meadmore came towards him with both her hands extended. "My young Croesus, I want to introduce you—" A host of figures bowing towards him politely and turning their backs. Paul Demassener, Dictator of Trier, Captain Kraft, Weber, Anne-Marie in a wine-coloured dress, a young policeman who had cut his mouth shaving, an old sailor with a dog, Kurtz, "from the Palatinate, an exile." He ran after them, begging them to stay and talk a little longer. "Tell me about yourselves. What can I do for you?" He offered them money, flung marks on the floor at their feet. They had all gone, and plop, plop, his coins made little ripples in the dark waters of the river. The largest ripple parted for a moment to disclose a policeman's face and a black cat floating down stream. Then Peter Remnant was helping him into his carriage at Trier Station. "My dear, did I ever tell you that enchanting story about Michael and Loulou?" And his voice ran on to the pounding of the engine long after he and everything had been drowned in the darkness of a tunnel.

Chant opened his eyes, but his dream con-

tinued to this extent—that the engine went on sounding. It was daylight, and the room was full of people. Stacks of paper reached half way up the walls. Of course, he began to remember, this was the hazardous day, and below in the cellar the printing machine was at work. But why? They had printed all the proclamations they required several days before.

“Kapper,” he called.

“What is the matter?” Kapper asked, dislodging himself from a mass of busy figures. “You have slept for a long while, Herr Chant.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Things have passed beyond you, Herr Chant.”

That was true, his brain admitted. Everything had passed beyond him, and again he slept. At his second awakening he found Kapper alone. The man sat at the table, his head between his hands in the attitude of one hopelessly dispirited.

“Have things failed?” Chant whispered without interest. In the inertia of his brain it seemed to him quite possible that a revolution had been quenched while he slept.

“Failed?” Kapper repeated in a tired voice. “They haven’t begun. There’s nothing to do

now but wait. They are fetching the arms across the river now."

"I should be in the market place," Chant said.

"To ride on a roundabout? There is nothing else to do."

"Do the men know their posts?"

"You have had your way with the arms, Herr Chant. Now it is my turn. They will never be used." The Jew's hands shook on the table, as he watched Chant with speculation. It was not despair, Chant realised, from which the Jew was suffering. He was vibrant with a triumph in which he could not yet believe.

"What have you done?" Chant cried at him in a sudden fear and a harking back to the confusion of the night.

"Only told Trier that Demassener is impotent and his wife a whore."

"I've fallen so low, have I?" Chant said with a slow hatred of himself. "I told you that? You can't use it, though."

"We have been printing all night," the Jew said.

"No one will believe you. You have done as much before."

"This time," Kapper said, "we have given

names, place, time. In an hour or two it will be all round Trier. Do you think Demassener will show fight then? The police won't shoot down their fellows on behalf of a laughing stock."

"You must stop it," Chant said. "I'll go to the police myself. It can't go on."

"If you try to leave here, Herr Chant," Kapper said with deliberation, "I shall shoot you. I will not let you ruin our plans a second time." When Chant had sunk back into his seat, the Jew added: "If it is of any comfort to you, it cannot be stopped now."

"It will not work. It will not work," Chant repeated to himself aloud. He said suddenly to the Jew: "They are human beings. Can't you think of them as human beings?" In a flash of enlightenment he saw the extent of suffering his drunken talk might have caused. "Only one person knew his secret," he said. "He will know that she betrayed him." He winced with the reflection of pain. To have lived with a woman for years, he thought, disclosing every weakness, every secret of body and mind with a complete trust, and then find your secrets told to a stranger, that must be a

worse pain than any physical betrayal. "Demassener loved her," he said. The Jew did not trouble to raise his face from his hands. Will he ever be able to believe in anything again? Chant wondered.

"I didn't come here to torture the man," he said. The Jew answered with a complete lack of interest: "Let him suffer. He has made others suffer."

"You are taking everything from him," Chant protested. "Why couldn't we take Trier and leave him—something?"

"It was you who took his wife," the Jew said.

"That wouldn't have mattered. Adultery happens every day. But a thing like this——" Chant pleaded in vain to a face which comprehended nothing. "This will shatter everything. He will never again be able to confide in any one at all."

"A man should stand alone," Kapper said. "You are young and sentimental. A man doesn't need a confidante like a girl in a French play."

"But I am responsible for this," Chant said. He wondered whether there was no way in which he could save Demassener and not betray

his cause. Perhaps if he could reach the palace and warn the Dictator of the coming outbreak, the man might escape before reading this final lampoon of his greatness. But Demassener, he was certain a moment later, would not leave Trier. He would trust to his police, and how could Chant persuade him that they were not to be trusted without telling him the truth?

"What are your plans?" he asked.

"We are arranging a procession," Kapper said with importance, "to appear before the palace on the occasion of Frau Demassener's birthday. While honouring her, we shall at the same time present a petition demanding the restitution of republican government."

"And your procession?" Chant asked.

"A rather gross conceit," the Jew said, with pleasure. "It will attract crowds. It should amuse. The police will never fire at a laughing crowd, and we shall not shoot first. Listen, you can hear them singing even here. It must be the song I wrote last night."

"I can hear the merry-go-rounds," Chant said, "that's all."

"Listen. Listen hard." The Jew, leaving his revolver on the table, went to the window

and pressed his face against the pane. His thin body quivered like a stretched cord. "They must be singing it," he said. "I had men posted through the crowd to start the song."

"What song?"

"My song. The song of Trier ruled by a man who hasn't even the strength to lie with his wife. Listen. Didn't you hear something then?"

"Nothing," said Chant. He was at the table now with his hands on the revolver.

"I've always dreamed of this," Kapper said. "Of driving out Demassener with one of my own songs. Things like that have been done before. There was 'Lillibullero.' I shall never be forgotten now. You do hear it? My ears are so full of the tune and the words, I've heard it sung for the last three hours."

"There's nothing. Nothing, I tell you," Chant cried at him in fury, but Kapper paid no attention to his words. It was evident that the sound of his own song, caught by too hopeful ears, drowned Chant's denial. "Now where are your barricades?" he said. "We shan't fire a shot to-day. I told you, and you wouldn't believe me. Arms are useless."

"Not quite," Chant said, covering him with the revolver. "Stand well away from the door."

Even then he was humiliated by knowing that he had not the Jew's whole attention. The Jew stepped aside without anger, his head still bent towards the imagined sound. "You are too late," he said, and the truth in his words was driven home by his attitude of strayed attention.

Chant put the revolver down and ran into the street. With no clear idea of what he meant to do, he ran towards the palace. No one was in the streets, no one was in the square. From the direction of the market place he heard for the first time what the Jew had been hearing for the last three hours—the sound of voices singing.

That song, he told himself, might be in praise of Anne-Marie Demassener, in whose honour all the houses in the square were hung with flags and bunting; but "too late" he thought again, when he saw three cars, full of police officers, leave the palace gates and drive towards the market place. Two officers stopped him at the entrance. The palace had never been so guarded at night as now it was in broad day. He could not see the Dictator, he was told. "If you will

show him my card," he said. If it was the card of the French President, an officer informed him, it could not be taken.

"I will pay you anything you like," Chant said. "I have information for him." To the obstinately shaken heads, he added: "He knows of me. Tell him Oliver Chant——" He said no more. The curious, smiling faces told him that they, at least, had read Kapper's broad-sheets. "The Englishman." "Chant." He heard name and description bandied back to yet another group of police officers, who regarded him with the same curiosity and the same smiles. They showed no hostility towards the man who had betrayed their leader. Chant saw then the loneliness of a cuckold.

"Are you really Herr Chant?" a police officer said. "You were sent for earlier, but you were not at your lodging. Do you want me to send up your name?"

He longed, Chant could see, to question him, to slap him on the back and exchange stories as one good liver to another. Already discipline was so far relaxed that he could stand and hesitate round the fringes of conversation.

"Will the Dictator see me?" Chant asked.

"Oh yes, I think he will see you," the officer said. "You have become, you know, much talked about. Here is Captain Kraft," and to the distant figure who walked towards them with military regularity: "Here, sir, is Herr Chant."

Captain Kraft advanced silently, fingering his moustache. A few nights before at the palace his regard had been as uninterested as if he had been facing a tailor's dummy. Now he watched Chant with a certain respect.

"I want to see the Dictator," Chant said, but with less conviction. There seemed little hope that the Dictator was still unaware of Anne-Marie Demassener's betrayal.

"There will be no difficulty about that," Captain Kraft said. His moustache twitched nervously, and Chant grew aware that the officer had smiled. "Come this way." He led Chant down the passage in which the old sailor had waited for an interview, and knocked softly upon a door.

Chant heard Demassener's reply, and was surprised that he could detect no change of tone, even in those few words, to show that the Dictator was aware that the secrets of his body

and mind had been bandied round the streets of Trier.

"Herr Chant is here," Captain Kraft said, with a bow so sharply completed that it denoted less discipline than a desire to catch another's expression before it vanished. Demassener said nothing, though he must have made some motion of assent, for Captain Kraft beckoned Chant to go in.

As he entered, Chant heard the Dictator say, with a sudden decision: "Captain Kraft."

"Yes?" Captain Kraft questioned him at the door, and added "Sir" as a too evident afterthought.

"Nothing. I shall not trouble you, Captain Kraft." The voice was dry. It could not be anything but courteous. The door closed, and at the same moment across a long room the eyes of the two men met.

"I had sent for you, Herr Chant," Demassener began, without rising from his chair, his hands folded on the desk before him. The only uncertainty his voice showed was in its inability to complete the sentence, which dwindled wretchedly out into the waiting air. It occurred to Chant that Demassener might still be ignorant

of the extent of his betrayal.

"Yes," he asked, "you wanted to know——"

"Know," Demassener repeated, rising and turning his face towards the window behind him, "I want to know more than you will ever tell me." The bitterness and impatience of his voice were completed by his desolate gaze. There is something in despair that seeks always for a window through which to watch a world wide enough to contain more than a reflection of an agonized personality. Chant was silent. He had the humanity to recognise pain and the torture of inadequate recompense.

"You are a gentleman," Demassener said slowly. He was too proud to show a ravaged face, and his back had been trained by long denial of beauty into inexpression. "I suppose you would agree to fight."

Chant said, with embarrassment: "I have never used either a sword or a pistol."

"No, you fight with other weapons. With paper, words and lies."

"Not lies," Chant said.

Demassener turned and said with a note of pleading: "Won't you admit that there are lies in that paper?" He pointed at his desk.

"None that I know," Chant said. He began to excuse himself. "I am not responsible——"

"If these were not lies," Demassener said, "do you think I should care who printed the thing? Do you think I should care"—he opened his hands with a gesture of abnegation—"if you finished and shot me?"

"I'm unarmed," Chant said.

"I am sorry. The chance that you might have the courage to shoot prevented my asking Captain Kraft to stay."

"I came," Chant said, "to ask you to leave Trier."

"Surely the threat should have come before the blow? It is my turn now. Your blow has failed."

"I wanted to spare you what's to come."

"If you want to spare me," Demassener said, "tell me." He paused as though he found it hard to measure the extent of all that he wished to know.

"Tell you?"

"How much of this is true? My wife has been kind to you, I know. She may have been indiscreet. You have met me, and there are things you have guessed. I am not ashamed of

them. But you have been told nothing. You have noticed perhaps some strain. There are subjects on which my wife and I do not agree." Demassener walked up and down, up and down, the strip of floor between desk and window. "Anybody could see that, and you have guessed something of our difference. But this paper lies. Admit that." He wheeled suddenly upon Chant and approached him. "You are a young man," he said. "You cannot conceive how much I love my wife. This—this filthy thing"—he lifted the paper from his desk—"this belongs to what I hate. I am not ashamed that my love is not of that kind. You are so bound up with the body, you do not know what a pain of tenderness there can be." He turned away and with hands knotted behind his back said, with an unintended questioning: "My wife loves me. We have been happy."

"If I tell you," Chant said slowly, feeling his way through obscuring shades of pity, "that these are lies——"

"I will thank you before shooting," Demassener answered.

"You mean you want to fight?"

"It is not my fault," Demassener said,

"that you did not practise shooting before you practised lying. Are these lies?" His hands touched a drawer of his desk, while he listened in visibly painful hope for the answer.

"Your wife has never loved me," Chant said, with a deliberation equally painful. He was recalling with vividness the shape of Anne-Marie Demassener's mouth as it framed the word "lust." There seemed no good reason to him then for not fighting. A bullet was as good a solution as any other. "Yes," he added, "these are all lies." He felt strangely justified by the pride which returned to his enemy's shoulders, and tender towards this man who also, without success, loved Anne-Marie Demassener. For the first time he was to face in open, apparent enmity the man whom he had come to Trier to fight, yet it was incongruous even then, when Paul Demassener laid two pistols on his desk, to regard him as an enemy.

"I know nothing about fighting," Chant said, "but isn't it the custom to have seconds?"

"This is not a duel," Demassener said, "this is punishment. I would not send seconds to a man who lied about my wife as you have done. Take a pistol. They are both loaded."

Chant picked up the weapon which was heavy to his hand. "You can take as many paces as you choose," Demassener said. He pointed at a clock which ponderously ticked. "It's one minute to the hour," he said. "At the first stroke, fire."

Across the length of the room they waited for the seconds to tick themselves away. A minute seemed a long time with nothing for either man to say. Demassener's eyes were fixed, but Chant's wandered. He had no intention of firing. A certain exhilaration touched his spirit, which had for many hours suffered from a dull pain. Drink could not cure him as certainly as could Demassener, to whom his gaze now returned with gratitude, and admiration for the certainty of his purpose. The heavy seconds passed towards the final moment, and again Chant moved his eyes to gather up his last vision. It was not, that bare room, the kind of scene which he would have cared to perpetuate upon dead eyeballs under closed lids. But it was not, he supposed, worse than the common sight of the dying—sheets carefully arranged, the doctor's face, the medicine glass and the staring dial of some familiar clock.

What made his wandering eyes pause was the sight of Anne-Marie Demassener standing with knotted hands in the doorway of an inner room. She had, it was clear, heard everything. The words spoken might reasonably have been expected to waken in her some tenderness for one man or the other. She showed none. Her glance held not so much interest or regret as an emigrant from a barren land might feel at a last glance towards the territory he leaves behind which has contained for him more pain than happiness. When she saw that Chant had perceived her, she said to Demassener without emotion and with no movement to separate the two men: "I do not mean to interfere. Only for the sake of truth, you should know that there are no lies in that paper."

The last word coincided with the first alarm of the clock, which fell with the chastity of music on a room heated with men's emotions. Demassener, with pistol still raised as though he had heard nothing, said: "Why don't you fire? That was the signal."

Chant, lowering the pistol, addressed Anne-Marie Demassener. "Why did you tell him that?" he asked. "It does no good."

"Do you think," she said, "that I would have let you fight with the idea that you were fighting over me? Fight if you like. It is for yourselves." She added, with the simplicity of one speaking an ultimate truth: "I belong to neither of you."

Demassener's voice came between them with an unexpected anger. A dying creed seemed to have been lent vitality by the sound of a heresy. "You are my wife," he said.

"And I have been loyal to you for five years," she said. "I have given now and will give again when I choose something you have never had and never wanted." She seemed, to both of them, unanswerable. Yet in spite of logic, reason, all the victorious things allied to her, Chant felt that there was something lacking, which he could not name and which might have pleaded in her for Demassener, something lovely, illogical and tender. But both men were waverers before her hard flame.

"You are leaving me, I suppose," Demassener said in a low voice. "I shall stay—with Trier."

That expression of his loyalty to another affection angered her, as it had done at dinner

many nights before. "With Trier that knows everything," she said.

"Do you think that matters?" he said. "If you knew how small such things will look in a few years. My work stands."

"Herr Chant must answer that," she said. But the difficult answer was taken out of Chant's mouth by a more impetuous agency. In many forms the answer was flung against the tall windows of the room—a song, wordless as it reached them, feet clattering on the stones of the square, some laughter and many voices. It came as a circus had come years before to the town where Oliver Chant was being taught unnecessary things, until the noise of its approach was flung like spray from the wide streets into the pedagogic room. Yet the circus, which had been heralded by a trumpet, was more martial than what Chant knew to be the overthrow of a Dictatorship. Revolution, as it first swept on the ears of two men and a woman, was not favoured with a trumpet and bore no banner.

Paul Demassener did not trouble to approach the window. Throughout the day the noise of roundabouts had come faintly from the square. The sounds conveyed to him no more than the

tribute he had commanded the town to pay his wife. To Chant they meant the failure of the last attempt to save his enemy.

The door opened and Captain Kraft, with twitching moustache, eyed them as though they were players busy in raising comedy to fantastic heights of wit. Chant had done his best to save Demassener; the Dictator's friends were determined that he should miss nothing.

"A deputation, sir."

"I can see no one, Captain Kraft."

Paul Demassener spoke with anger and a certain apprehension. Captain Kraft had entered without a knock.

"They have come in a kind of procession, sir. The square is full of people. The police really do not know how to act."

Demassener crossed to the window. Captain Kraft watched his back with curiosity, Chant with apprehension. Neither expected the long interval during which the Dictator, without speech or movement, watched the square. Anne-Marie Demassener, who had turned away as one not accustomed to interfere in her husband's business, grew aware of tension and moved, too, to the window. Demassener was the first to

tire of the sight of his own horned and mutilated effigy and of the representation of his wife. He said to Captain Kraft, with no note in his voice to show that the proceedings before the palace possessed for him any personal significance: "Tell the police to clear the square."

The austere Captain Kraft, leaning his body at a slight angle towards the doorpost, became loquacious. "We should have arrested the procession already," he explained, without hurry, "but there are several thousand spectators. As you see, sir, the square is packed."

"Tell the police to clear the square," the Dictator repeated in the same tone, as though he was unaware that another's voice had filled the interval between the command and its repetition.

"The police have done their best." Captain Kraft relapsed still further, and allowed one hand to amuse itself with his moustache, while his eyes caressed the scene and gathered details, to be recounted later to his brother officers, of how the three chief actors, husband, wife and lover played their parts. "Really, sir, they are at their wits' end. Luckily the crowd is not dangerous. Everyone is thoroughly good

humoured. If I might presume to advise you, sir, I should receive the deputation."

"A deputation from those people," the Dictator said with astonishment. He paused, and glancing once at his wife, he said, with reluctance: "Tell the officer in command at the entrance to fire into the crowd." He added slowly, looking past Chant to the feet of Anne-Marie Demassener, where he laid his last tribute of preferring her honour to the good of the town he loved: "The insult to myself is a small one, but I cannot let the insult to my wife pass."

When Captain Kraft did not move with alacrity to his command, he repeated more briefly: "Tell the police to fire."

"They will not fire," Anne-Marie Demassener said, without turning from the window, "at a crowd of laughing people."

"Frau Demassener is right, sir," Captain Kraft said. "They will not fire."

"They will disobey orders?" Demassener asked simply, and when Captain Kraft made the gesture of one who wishes to annotate the truth, added: "I suppose I cannot even trust you to pass on the order."

"Would it not be better, sir, under the

circumstances, to receive the deputation?"

"I will receive no one," Demassener said, "until the square is clear. If the police refuse to obey orders, let them know what that means."

"What does it mean?" Anne-Marie Demassener asked, with a contempt for vague words.

"The end," Demassener said. "The Republic, what else?" For the first time since he had learned the truth, he faced his wife without reserve or fear. His question fell between them less as a question than as a blank admission of knowledge, knowledge that, without even position left, he had no hope of her.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "that this is my fault."

"No," Demassener said. "You have your excuse, and Herr Chant has his. These people," he nodded at the window, "believe that they have theirs. Only I seem left out. Well, I have my belief."

In the square, the effigies played out their parts, undisturbed by the mirth of thousands, undeviating, unobservant. To the living characters, Chant and Captain Kraft were as little important.

"It has made me hate you," she said, and

angered, perhaps, by the consciousness of how excuse and belief must compare in any final judgment, "now I can only pity you."

He took the blow painfully. "There is nothing pitiful about me," he said, with an absolute lack of conviction. "Unless," he added, without dubiety, "that I love you." The statement called for something with greater integrity than taunts. "God alone knows," she said, with no real belief in a Divinity less puzzled than herself, "whether I loved you or not."

The two assertions had been made and the ground was clear, if not for reconciliation, at least for a mutual cutting of the bond that held them still with pain together. They had ceased to taunt, to accuse and to misunderstand. But the sound of feet came between them, the sound approaching them in echoes down the long empty passages of the palace.

"Captain Kraft," Demassener said, "who is that?"

Captain Kraft, leaning against the door with as near an approach to negligence as his stiff body could attain, said: "That, I suppose, sir, is the deputation."

"I gave no order," Demassener asserted, without reproach. He was engaged in marshalling before his mind these indications of his fall.

"What else could the police do?" Captain Kraft said. "The crowd will have their fun."

Demassener seemed to reach a decision. "What the police cannot do," he said, but his statement was too positive to be concluded. He saw too well the possibility of failure. Quickly he approached the window of his study and flung it open. It was evident to them all that he intended to speak to the crowd. The songs, laughter and shouts ceased suddenly, as the crowd became aware of Paul Demassener's figure standing in the window above. Then, before he could gather his mind and frame his lips to the first compelling words, the noise broke out again with an added intensity. Laughter predominated, though someone, with a grievance possibly, threw a stone. It was a small stone. It fell on the carpet, striking no one and hurting nothing. The coating of mud fell off and littered the floor. Demassener stepped away from the window, and almost at the same moment the deputation entered the room. The

three men came in rapidly with their heads slightly lowered, like cattle frightened but menacing, halting abruptly a little way from the door. The man with the syphilitic scar stayed nearest to the door, as though he would guard the way of retreat.

Peter Torner kept his gaze on Kapper, and Kapper's was not on Demassener, but on the stone. He had expected almost anything from shots to prayers, but not the even more significant pebble. Raising his eyes he said with triumph: "Have they started throwing stones? Believe me, it's all against my wish. They had no such orders."

"Will you leave me alone with these gentlemen?" Demassener asked his wife, but when she remained silent, watching the scene with curiosity, he did not repeat his request.

"Your wife is quite safe with us," Kapper said, with impertinent politeness. "Even so far as you are concerned, I think I can promise that there will be nothing worse than a few pebbles." He grinned at the stone on the floor.

Demassener stood in front of his desk with his hands clasped behind him. "I am sorry that I don't know your names," he said. He added,

with amusement: "May I ask whether you are the provisional government?"

"I am Joseph Kapper, the poet," the Jew said, with almost all the old pride. Only the presence of Chant, who had seen his previous humiliation, restrained him.

"I used to read some of your scurrilous rhymes," Demassener replied.

The Jew's nerves seemed suddenly to snap. He stamped upon the floor and said shrilly: "Don't laugh, you are beaten."

"Even if I were beaten," Demassener said slowly, as if he aimed each word at an exposed nerve, "I see no reason why I should not laugh. Can you imagine anything more laughable than me beaten by you?"

"The Post Office is in our hands," the Jew said. "The police here can do nothing."

"They can fire," Demassener said.

"We have our arms, too. Ask Herr Chant. Order them to fire and see what happens."

"Captain Kraft," Demassener said. He was unanswered. Captain Kraft had left the room. His departure was as significant as the flinging of the stone.

"Gone," the Jew said. Even the solitary

word was an unnecessary emphasis.

"Well," Demassener asked, leaning back a little on his desk, as though standing tired him, "what do you want?"

"We came," Kapper said, "to offer you the chance of leaving Trier. We have telephoned to the station. They will stop the express to Luxemburg this evening."

"And my wife?"

Anne-Marie Demassener crossed the floor to the little knot of men. Her eyes, green and gold, gazing from a white face, seemed to gather them up in an unsavoury bouquet and cast them negligently down again. "Shall I stay?" she asked herself aloud. She watched the reaction of her words on Kapper. In their effect on her husband and her lover she was uninterested. The Jew met her gaze with a slight smile. Even in their first meeting in Sebastian Lintz's house it had seemed to Chant that they understood each other. "Wherever I am, I am at home," she stated, with the pride of one who had lost one nationality in marriage and another as easily in adultery.

"I can assure you, Frau Demassener," the Jew said, "you shall be as safe in Trier as you

wish to be." He waved his hand with the conscious magnificence of one who could speak for the city. "We owe everything," he said, "to you and Herr Chant."

Demassener stepped a pace from the desk, his hands behind him. "Say that again," he said, "in case I misunderstood you."

"We owe everything to Herr Chant and Frau Demassener—one might say in co-operation." Demassener's right hand rose, holding the duelling pistol and almost at the same moment the man in the doorway fired. The pistol fell on the floor and rolled to the side of the muddy pebble. Demassener stepped forward with his left hand extended towards the Jew, then lurched and fell forward across his desk.

For several moments no one moved to him. His life or death mattered less than the sound of the shot, of which the authentic peal was taken up and repeated and bandied hollowly down the long corridors and empty rooms. Everyone waited for the sound of feet, and no one fully trusted his ears when silence returned.

"We have won," Kapper said at last softly,

so as not to obscure any sound that might still approach them and show that men existed who cared whether Paul Demassener was alive or dead. It was Chant who made certain that he was alive. Anne-Marie Demassener made no movement to go to him, but when Chant asked for something to serve as a bandage, she offered a useless handkerchief.

"It will do you no good if he dies," Chant told Kapper, who stood idly by.

"I cannot leave him here in Trier," the Jew said. "He must be got away this evening. Who will go with him?"

They came and stood in a circle round Paul Demassener's body, considering him. It was the last embarrassment he caused them—not to die. No one really hated him. They could pity him, but they could not murder him.

"Someone must take him," Joseph Kapper said, with a growing indifference. Already his mind was wandering to the next stage of his progress, the proclamations, the disarming of Demassener's supporters, guards for the stations and the gas works.

"Why not his wife?" Chant said with anger. Anne-Marie Demassener stepped close to the

body of her husband, and leant a little towards him. With pain, yet rejoicing that there was some relic of integrity in that woman without a country, Chant thought that she was bending to kiss her husband's face. But the two white faces remained separated by inches, one white with weariness and shock, the eyes closed; the other white as a carefully prepared mask, the eyes open, gazing. The eyes of the one, Chant thought, were closed on a belief, though not a belief any longer in his wife or the town he had served. The eyes of the other were open, but they did not disclose what the mask hid—if it hid anything at all beyond excuses and reasons and explanations and a doubt whether she had ever loved the man at all. Chant shared the doubts and excuses. If only, he thought, I could share the belief, how happy I should be even now. But he knew that he could never share it without the intervention of a miracle, and a miracle was one of the innumerable things in which he did not believe.

Anne-Marie Demassener looked up from her husband's face. She had the appearance of one who, after a long journey without an object, has arrived at her destination and is puzzled why

she has come. "No, no," she said to Chant. "I will not go with him."

"Then I will go," Chant said.

They carried Demassener away on a stretcher, and laid him on a bed to wait for evening. He was unconscious and became delirious with the passage of hours. His wound was clumsily dressed, for no doctor would venture into the streets. The police had surrendered their arms, and hundreds of Kapper's supporters were drunk and shooting away ammunition at the sky. They were quite harmless and in the best of humour. A few prostitutes had already left their concealment, and the fair in the market place, begun soberly in honour of the Dictator's wife, continued more riotously in honour of the Republic. Joseph Kapper, still afraid, perhaps of a demonstration of sympathy for the fallen Dictator, had decided that Demassener's body should be carried from a side door of the palace and put on board the train outside the station. When dark came, two men arrived with a stretcher. One of them was a little drunk, and lurched under the weight of the body, till pain pierced Demassener's unconsciousness of all the moving world, and he cried out for his wife.

Chant eased the body on the stretcher, and Demassener remained silent down the whole length of the dark corridor. Only at the end, where long windows allowed the flight of rockets to illumine the empty palace intermittently with flashes of flame, he murmured with satisfaction that the police were clearing the square.

Outside the door, Joseph Kapper and Anne-Marie Demassener watched in silence the stretcher carried into the road. Chant, looking back, saw Kapper turn up his coat collar against the wind and move towards the palace. Perhaps his spirit had been subdued by the prone passage of his enemy, for Kapper, the poet, went in at the side door inconspicuously and without raising his hand in any kind of gesture, whether of salute, triumph or a vague magniloquence. Lurching here and there with the movements of the drunken man, the stretcher passed out of his sight, if from one of the rooms, empty except for ancient furniture and dark portraits, the Jew had chosen to watch them leave the gloom he had imagined for an obscurity in which he had no part or power.

"Herr Chant."

Oliver Chant turned and saw with anger that the woman had followed him. He had been her lover, yet she still addressed him as a stranger.

"Frau Demassener," he said.

He recognised, though he could no longer admire, the sensitiveness of her mind that was able to understand the cause of his anger. "Do you want me to use endearments," she said, "now and here?" indicating the dark night shot with flames, the drunken bearer, the unlit palace and the wounded man, who groaned a little as one of the men slipped in the freezing mud. "It would be trivial," she said. "There are more important things than our love."

"Don't call it love," Chant said. "You've already named it lust." He added with resentment, because he could not clear his mind of the pain which he supposed was the remainder of love: "What are you going to do now?"

"Live," she said, "we all do that, this year, next year, some time, never. Shall I be sufficiently humble to offer myself to you again?"

"I wanted you to marry me," Chant said.

"Oh no, I shall never marry again in that

way. Why do you want me to? Do you believe in God as he does? Never again. It will be, you know, a kind of faithfulness."

The qualification awoke a chain of echoes in Chant's brain. That, he thought, was the symbol of all his enterprise, nothing of his genuine desire, everything in a distant relationship to it—a kind of war, a kind of loyalty, a kind of love, and now a kind of faithfulness. It was not enough. "Good-bye," he said. She looked past him at the stretcher, and said in a voice a little strained: "Is he all right? Will he live?"

"He will, unfortunately," Chant said, and added, with a contempt which he had never dreamed that he would one day show to Anne-Marie Demassener: "Are you changing your mind, will you go with him?"

"No, no," she said. "I ought to think myself lucky that that's broken at last."

Chant turned and followed the stretcher down the road, but he had not gone ten yards before he heard her steps again. He turned and peered back at her with anger, jealousy and resentment. "For God's sake go," he said. "Are you going to haunt us?"

Leaving six yards of dark as a barrier between herself and his resentment, she said: "Has he asked for me? Is he conscious? Does he want me?"

Chant flung his lies back at her like stones at an image, longing to deface for ever what must, he told himself, be the thin mask of a counterfeit beauty. "Yes, he is conscious," he said. "He doesn't need you. He has never asked for you." He heard her steps go slowly back along the road, and turned to follow the unconscious man.

When they reached the railway lines the express awaited them. A horn of smoke mounted towards the red signal lamp, and waves of sound from the lit line of windows came over the rails towards them, voices, high, low, harsh, soft, chattering, shouting. The guard, an aggrieved, puzzled man, told them that he had been warned at the frontier to expect this delay. It was very unusual to allow passengers to enter the train except at stations. "An empty carriage," Chant said shortly, "and find out whether there is a doctor on board."

With a rising scream a rocket climbed into the air, and burst in a shower of sparks around the

train, which, with a grinding of brakes, began to move again on its journey. The wounded man groaned and twisted his head. Voices called to each other from windows asking the cause of the delay; the minutes passed, and they settled again to silence. Trier ceased to be a noise in the night, and became in the distance and the dark a diminishing fountain of fire. Green and red lights winked quickly and were gone. Night came up to the windows and shut out everything behind its infinite height, save occasional candles lit in small rooms, the torch of a girl going home along dark roads, and the lamp of a boy reading.

Chant looked up to see a figure watching him from the corridor. "Are you a doctor?" he asked.

"Say," said the man, "you are the fellow that got on to the train just now, aren't you? What's happened in Trier? Those weren't all rockets. Who's your sick friend?"

What had happened in Trier, Chant thought, following across the white face of the wounded man a long succession of images, of Anne-Marie Demassener standing in the doorway of Lintz's shop: of a face watching him in a mirror; of a

mouth that came to his in the dark garden: of her body as she let her coat fall: and of her lips which formed the word "lust" under the hanging, hawk-like Christ.

The man said encouragingly: "I'd be glad of a story. I'm on the *Chicago Tribune*. Your friend. . . ."

"My friend," Chant said, dwelling on the two words with pain, irony and amazement, "is Herr Demassener. I have no story."

But the representative of the New World was not to be denied. He closed the door into the corridor and pulled down the blind. Then with a kind of reverence, which was at least a passable imitation of the old and authentic, he tiptoed across the carriage and gazed at the face of the man who, beneath the closed lids, carried his faith intact and hidden into a doubting world.

"Christ, what a scoop," he said.

A long trail of sparks swept by the window, and as the train passed from night into the redoubled darkness of a tunnel, these infinitesimal and transient stars lay for a moment along the track which Paul Demassener had taken from Trier. They were extinguished by wind, rain,

and the passage of time. Their life was measured in seconds, as the night's was counted in hours, and as Paul Demassener's was to be counted still in years, Chant thought with regret and pity, aware of the dawn lighting with an equal pallor his own and his enemy's face.

THE END

March, 1929—July, 1930.